

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Points of Light proposes to have 50 AmeriCorps members who will engage service members, veterans, and their families in volunteer leader training in California, Georgia, Virginia, New York, Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois, and Washington, DC. We requested 50 AmeriCorps members for our 2015 program year. We will allocate 10 slots (2 FT and 16 PT), which is 20% of our total slots, to members with disabilities. By the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for training 1,200 service members, veterans, and their families as volunteer leaders to increase the knowledge of volunteer leadership principles, increase community perceptions of the military and create stronger bonds between the civilian community and military and veteran families. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 7,500 volunteers who will be engaged in volunteer service projects that will address a community need.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Veterans. The CNCS investment of \$384,416 will be matched with \$403,983 (\$60,000 in host site contributed matching funds and \$343,983 in private funding raised by Points of Light).

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1) Problem/Need - In 2001 the dynamic of our country was forever changed and, for over a decade, service members, veterans and their families have traversed this world to protect the civil liberties that our nation promised. These men and women looked fear in the eye and accepted their positions graciously as they served their country. With the winding down of the Iraqi and Afghani conflicts, an influx of service members are transitioning out of the military which increases the pool of talented veterans and family members in local communities. This population is faced with the impacts of deployment, combat-related injuries, and continuous transitions. These individuals not only deserve our highest form of appreciation but also a concentrated effort of programmatic support to address the needs that developed while they served.

James Munroe, Ed. B, VA Boston Healthcare System published an article on military to civilian reintegration and the reasons why reintegration into the civilian culture is challenging for service members and their families. The culture of the military is based on safety and security, trust, mission execution, decision making and responsiveness, predictability, and emotional control. Service members are trained to remain vigilant and prepared at all times for an enemy attack creating a frenzied persona not understood by most. They tend to have a heightened sense of awareness and suspicion for simple everyday occurrences. A car accident may cause veterans extreme anxiety and

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create a sense of imminent danger for them. These feelings and thoughts are foreign to civilians who have always experienced the security of their local community and are key examples of the military to civilian connectedness gap making reintegration difficult for all involved.

Over half of the military force is married with an estimate of 40% having at least two children. Most of these families reside in their local communities instead of military installations. Although the country continues to rally around service members and veterans, there are fewer available resources for family members, and unfortunately they too are impacted by the post-service transition. For example the study by Wartime Military Deployment and Increased Pediatric Mental and Behavioral Health Complaints Pediatrics show that there has been a significant increase in outpatient visits for behavioral health issues, behavioral health disorders, and stress for dependent children between the ages of three to eight due to deployments and continuous familial separation. The disconnect between military families and the communities where they reside often results in military family members not receiving the support and services they need for successful integration and the communities where they reside, missing the opportunity to benefit from their unique experiences and skills. Many communities and their residents are unable to relate to the lifestyle of military families. These challenges need to be addressed in order for the strengths distinctive to their culture as military to emerge and make our communities stronger. By bridging this gap, both military families and the communities are strengthened.

The Blue Star Families' 2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey reports that service members, veterans and their families' top concerns are retirement and military pay/benefits. When transitioning into the civilian world, military families seek financial security, community acceptance, and opportunities for employment during their reintegration process. In a March 2014 report from the Washington Post and Kaiser, studies found that 55% (1.4 million) of military veterans feel disconnected from civilian life and 51% say the military is not doing enough to transition veterans to civilian life. Volunteering is one method to address these concerns and also identify citizen leaders in local communities. Communities need citizen leaders -- individuals who are passionate and driven to make a difference in their society. Service members, veterans and military families have the tools and desire to serve in this capacity displaying themselves as the models for change. Qualities such as resiliency, perseverance, commitment, strength of character, and productiveness are key components that these individuals possess and which are needed to lead and execute projects within the community that are successful and sustainable. For veterans and their families, volunteerism becomes a method to build camaraderie and teamwork, increasing their connection to the community

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where they live.

Volunteers make a difference in communities each day. Organizations such as Civic Assets and The Mission Continues are proven examples of how using the matchless leadership talents of the Armed Forces in service is transformative for the individual serving and the community impacted. The economic value of a volunteer is immeasurable due to the sustaining impact that is made through their time and efforts. This sentiment holds true for military volunteers due to the qualities that are embedded in them from their military service. Civic Assets conducted a survey in 2009 -- "All Volunteer Force: From Military to Civilian Service" -- that reported that veterans have a profound interest in community service.

According to survey respondents: 92% of veterans strongly agreed or agreed that serving their community is important to them; 90% strongly agreed or agreed that service was a basic responsibility of every American.

When engaged in service "our country benefits from the completion of vital social service, environmental, and infrastructure projects". The Mission Continues also found that service after the military provided a sense of purpose and increased community connectedness for veterans. Their November 2014 case study, *The Mission Continues: A Case Study of the Well After Service Model*, reported that the deployment of veterans into their local communities to serve created a "renewed sense of purpose in life, a stronger social network, professional development support and the broader health benefits of serving others by volunteering". Supervisors of the Mission Continues Fellows felt that the veterans performed better than their civilian volunteer counterparts and described their veteran volunteers as "a strong leader," "disciplined" and "willing to work together." The report concluded with stating that "veterans engaged in civic service are...establishing the value of veterans' character and experience in the eyes of their civilian co-workers and supervisors". Despite their hardships, the military and their families continue to lead, serve, and strengthen their communities and POL believes continuing the service of military families through volunteerism in their own communities will lead to successful reintegration.

AmeriCorps members engaging military families in service as volunteer leaders is key to scaling what continues to surface around the country as a solution that is working to address reintegration challenges. Focusing efforts on military families as volunteer leaders will allow those individuals to hone their leadership skills, develop new skills marketable in the civilian world, and connect with their community in a new and different way. Military families are able to learn coping techniques to assimilate into the civilian community and civilians are able to appreciate the value of military

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families despite their inability to relate to their military experiences. This in turn eases the stress of military transition and decreases the challenges of reintegration. Providing military families with meaningful ways to connect with and serve within their community and then engaging community members to serve alongside veterans displays how military families are civic assets. By leveraging the human capital and passion of AmeriCorps members we will deploy service as a strategy to address the reintegration challenge and also reform the conversation around veterans to that of community leaders and not victims.

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model - Reintegration is a process that currently requires an extensive amount of time and effort; our program will serve as a bridge that could lessen this burden by connecting the military with the community through civic engagement, improving their physical and mental well-being through social and physical activities, and developing the professional skills needed for employment and attaining financial security. The POL AmeriCorps program is designed to train military families as volunteer leaders to address needs in their local communities. This program teaches military families how to use their strengths to address community needs resulting in an increased acceptance and appreciation within communities, a successful military reintegration, and stronger military families. Service members, veterans and military members embody selfless service, hard work, and dedication. These qualities are strengths that community leaders must possess when committing to projects that address community needs. As local residents see that military volunteer leaders are invested in the improvement of their communities, they will rally behind these volunteers for the sacrifices they made while serving in the military and also for their continued service within their communities afterward. This new found community "family" support is one of the leading components of a successful military reintegration with employment, financial security, and wellness as contributing factors also. There is a symbiotic relationship between serving and attaining each of these needs. This reintegration positively impact the individual volunteer and it also makes military families stronger as they elect to serve alongside each other working towards community improvement.

Due to the military reduction in force, implementing programs that provide personalized attention is not financially feasible or sustainable. AmeriCorps members are suited to provide community leadership and coordination among veteran serving organizations because a focus on impact that leverages the human capital of volunteers. The government and nonprofits honor the MilVet population by providing services to support their evolving needs but find it difficult to keep up with the increased demand for support. AmeriCorps members are uniquely positioned to successfully engage

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military families in service and to create meaningful and effective programs that impact the community. The multiplier effect of members engaging volunteer leaders makes them uniquely positioned to create both breadth and depth of impact.

The Points of Light AmeriCorps program will address the need of military family reintegration through the training and mobilization of military families as volunteer leaders in their local communities. POL will deploy a team of 50 AmeriCorps members, 10 of which will serve as full-time members for 11 months. Another 40 will serve as half-time members for 9 months. We will partner with up to 20 nonprofit partner organizations to host the AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members will identify and engage veteran family units and provide them with the guidance and support required to a) conduct a community needs assessment, b) lead volunteers in service, and c) design and manage community service projects. During their service period AmeriCorps members will recruit and manage military families in the three core program activities. Each half-time member will be responsible for recruiting a minimum of 24 participants during their term of service to participate in each of the core program activities. Fulltime members will serve as a peer leader for the half-time members in addition to meeting these community recruitment goals. The program is designed to support the entire family unit. Each cohort will complete a service project as their final volunteer leader training requirement. At the culmination of the AmeriCorps service periods, members will conduct a capstone community service project in which they will invite all former family volunteers to participate.

AmeriCorps members will have eight weeks to complete one cohort of required volunteer training and a local service project. Over the course of the 8 weeks, cohorts will receive 10 hours of volunteer training and will participate in 2 hours of additional service outside of the training. The first workshop will consist of conducting a needs assessment for their local communities to identify the most pressing need in their community. Subsequent weeks will consist of Volunteer Leader Training workshops for the military family participants. Military families will have the option of when to attend Volunteer Leader Training sessions and will be asked to return on the service project day for project execution. The final weeks of the cohort will consist of the AmeriCorps members finalizing the logistics for the project and with the Military Families and additional community volunteers executing the service project. The goal is for each cohort to recruit an additional 50 community volunteers for their service project. At the completion of each cohort, AmeriCorps members will spend two weeks planning and recruiting for the next cohort. The program year will result in 50 AmeriCorps members training 1,200 service members, veterans, and military family members as volunteer leaders and mobilizing

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7,500 volunteers in service for a total of 8,700 community members engaged.

The states targeted for this program include California, Georgia, Virginia, New York, Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois, and Washington, D.C. due to their large population of veterans and military families and expressed interest of participating in a reintegration program. Points of Light requested an intent to apply from the current 19 AmeriCorps sites participating in our Year Three Veteran Leader Corps. There was an overwhelming positive response to the new program concept. The following sites have confirmed their willingness to reapply for our new AmeriCorps Program that focuses on family reintegration: Volunteers of America of Los Angeles, Goodwill Industries of Orange County, Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, Volunteers of America Houston, The GI Go Fund, Goodwill NY/NJ, Volunteer of America Chesapeake, HandsOn Jacksonville, American Red Cross, Georgia Region, RallyPoint/6, Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, and RSVP Weld County.

POL will recruit additional sites by leveraging their partnerships with Joining Community Forces, POL HandsOn affiliates, and the Community Blueprint Advisory Council. The advisory council is made up of 18 leading military organizations that regularly advise and guide POL's work in this space.

Priority will be given to sites that focus on service regardless of the size of the community (i.e. rural, urban, and suburban). In our goal to reach 50 members, sites will serve as the lead recruiters due to their proximity and knowledge of the volunteers. POL will support their efforts nationally through social media campaigns and engaging national partners. We will encourage our sites to recruit all demographics of AmeriCorps members to ensure diversity and different experiences throughout the program. POL values diverse capabilities, perspectives and leadership skills and believe that the pairing of military families with civilian teammates will provide deep and consistent relationship building for the veteran to the civilian community.

HandsOn Network and The Corporation for National and Community Service developed a Volunteer Leader Guidebook that POL AmeriCorps members will use to train military families as volunteers. The first step in the training manual is to conduct a needs assessment to identify the greatest challenge in the community. The follow-on steps include: creating a volunteer leader program for your community, recruiting volunteers and building teams, connecting service with learning, building skills through service, and retaining and recognizing volunteers. This training will provide the necessary skills for military families to address community needs in the absence of an AmeriCorps members. Training families affords them the opportunity to address needs specific to their communities while also showing how communities can benefit from the skills and leadership that military families have to offer. Also, military families that lead the efforts to improve the

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communities in which they live show personal investment and also a commitment to those who reside in the same cities and towns. The intent is that the military families will continue to serve with their local host site organizations after the completion of the workshops. They will serve as leaders within the service field resolving community needs. The result is mutually-beneficial to the host organization and military family members. The organizations gain a committed and loyal volunteer leader. The military families have also increased their community network pool and can continue to work to build lasting relationships within the community in which they live. AmeriCorps members will develop their own volunteer project to complete their service term. This project will address a need specific to each community with a goal of fostering innovation, developing a best practice, and increasing the interaction between civilians and veterans. This capstone project will also be used as a recognition event to share the stories and successes from the different cohorts, inviting prior participants to stay involved as well.

Military Family Reintegration Activities performed by Members include: Recruit military families for volunteer leader training; Conduct a community needs assessment with participants; Conduct training sessions on volunteer leadership (flexible schedule); Plan and execute one service project with cohorts of family volunteers; Plan/execute a larger scale capstone project designed to address a community need and recognize the community volunteer leaders; Effectively utilize technology and social media to market the program, problem solve, and share best practices.

3) Evidence - The idea of group and family volunteering is not a new one; "Group Volunteering engages a group of people to volunteer together and can provide support and services in a community in a short timeframe, as it involves many people working together instead of individual volunteers involved in independent task. Group volunteering strengthens relationships whether family and friends; and bond new friends and acquaintances."

Existing data shows that military families, due to the distinct nature of their circumstances, have a tough time integrating into communities where there is little to no understanding of the challenges they face. Business Executives for National Security (BENS) Warrior Gateway Program worked with Booz Allen Hamilton and Gallup on a study that reinforces what we know to be true, that "reintegration doesn't occur at a national level. It happens at the community level." They further remind us that the solution for reintegration issues lies in, "building relationships among public, private and nonprofit organizations that serve veterans by establishing programs, networks and other mechanisms for sharing resources, services, best practices, etc. The successful programs cited by study participants embody several common characteristics. First, they typically involved a

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multifaceted community of organizations that worked together on shared mission objectives to address problems that none could solve on its own. In addition, in many instances, information and communication technologies served as "enablers" that allowed the community of like-minded stakeholders to collaborate effectively. And finally, many programs succeeded by pushing information and services to the community level, where veterans' needs are typically best addressed. The study demonstrated the need for addressing many issues at the community level, and without increased means to marshal resources, veterans and their families will continue to "fall between the cracks."

Points of Light has extensive experience blending the resources of the public and private sectors as well as marshaling the efforts of many non-profits to unite in a common goal. We have a great deal of experience in the Military Initiatives program with our current Veteran Leader Corps and Community Blueprint organizations as they work together and with the local community to provide better service to our Veterans.

The new veteran AmeriCorps program at Points of Light addresses the reintegration of the whole family when civilian life is the new normal. Our goal is to capitalize on successful models of implementation while applying our own tools and resources to scale the ideas that are already working. Team Red White and Blue operates similarly in that they organize local opportunities for veterans, military families and the community to connect through physical and social activity including volunteering in 115 communities nationwide. This supports our proposition that by providing meaningful volunteer opportunities to military families will help them feel more connected to their community, create awareness of the resources the community provides, and foster new relationships in civilian life. Team Red White and Blue issued findings in September 2014 on a study of their members and community members that indicated the following: A significant majority of members across all categories (Veteran, Civilian, and Active Duty) indicated a stronger sense of purpose, more meaningful relationships, and improved health (physical, mental, and emotional); Veterans feel a very strong sense of shared purpose since joining TRWB. They have more people in their lives that motivate them (69%) and have more opportunities to inspire others (73%); A groundbreaking component of the study was measuring the benefits of belonging to an Organization that helped them to establish authentic connections. While 57% of our "less active" members said they benefited from the opportunity to share their personal journeys, an astonishing 86% of "active" members found these experiences beneficial; Veterans have more people they can turn to for emotional support (57%), they are more involved in the local community (60%), they have more programs they can turn to for resources (64%), and they feel an increased sense of

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brotherhood/sisterhood in their lives (66%); A majority of Veterans (73% among "active" members) reported sharing the challenges they face as a veteran with civilians, and 87% demonstrated the strengths they have as a Veteran to civilians; Of equal importance, 75% of civilian members stated that they better understand both the challenges and strengths of Veterans in their communities.

Perhaps the strongest evidence of both military families and community working together having strong and positive impact is through the work of Sixth Branch. <http://the6thbranch.org/>. The 6th Branch is a nonprofit organization utilizing the leadership and organizational skills of military veterans to execute aggressive community service initiatives at the local level. They operate under the premise that "the military skill set is ideal for the initiation and organization of community projects," so they "empower veterans by utilizing the characteristics typically strengthened through military service, such as a sense of mission, a dedication to duty, and a love of country." The truth is, most military family members possess these same skills and characteristics.

Thanks to data from Blue Star Families, we know that military family members do volunteer, 68% of those military families surveyed have volunteered. By working with local and national partners, including those already in our Community Blueprint network, we will create a pipeline of military families to deeply engage in our Military Family Corps. Through aggressive recruiting of military family volunteer leaders, Points of Light and our host organizations will be providing a gateway of opportunity for military families that is often hard to navigate; "75.4% of young non-volunteer veterans said they do not have information on meaningful opportunities." (Godsay, S., Nover, A., & Kawashima-Ginsberg K. (2009). Volunteering & Civic Engagement among Recent Veterans. Fact Sheet. Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University.)

Volunteering is a powerful tool in the reintegration process because it not only connects military families more closely to their community, but volunteering can also help family members cope with the struggles with employment and well-being. Research done in 2010 by United Health Care (United Health Study -- Volunteering and Your Health: How Giving Back Benefits Everyone) indicates that for any volunteer we are likely to see huge improvements in health and well-being: 92% of volunteers agree that volunteering enriches their sense of purpose in life; They are also significantly more likely (36%) to rate their overall satisfaction with their lives as "very good" compared to non-volunteers (26%); Volunteers are significantly more likely (40%) to say they have a "very good" sense of purpose in their life, compared to non-volunteers (27%); 29% of volunteers who suffer from a chronic condition agree that "volunteering has helped me manage a chronic illness"; 89% of volunteers agree

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that "volunteering has improved my sense of well-being"; 73% of volunteers agree that "volunteering lowers my stress levels." Volunteering is crucial, then, for our military families, especially those recovering from loss, lack of stability in employment, coping with the illness or trauma of a loved one returning injured, etc.

While volunteering will meet the needs of our military families to reintegrate into civilian life, we must also be cognizant of how this will not only positively change the community through acts of service, but in serving alongside their new civilian neighbors, military families begin to change the dialogue around the value of military families in communities. The conversation moves from one of military victims to community assets. The 2011 study on the Social Impact of volunteerism reminds us that, "volunteering helps to foster greater trust among citizens and developing norms of solidarity and reciprocity that are essential for stability."

The fabric of our communities is based on integration not separation which is what so many military families are feeling when they return to civilian life. Data from Blue Star Families tells us that 51% of military spouses are stressed by issues around isolation from friends and family, 53% of veterans describe their transition [to civilian life] as difficult, and 29% of veterans felt unprepared for their transition to civilian life. Community members who have not experienced military life have a hard time understanding the specific needs and issues military families face. But volunteering together can bridge that gap. Highlighted in the study on the Social Impact of Volunteerism is research by Keely S. Jones (2006) on the distinct connection of volunteering with public life and civic engagement. Using data from The Survey of Giving and Volunteering in the United States, the author finds that greater volunteering is most strongly promoted by community ties. One such theoretical framework is that of community integration, which suggests that community ties within a physical place draw people into common interests and public engagement. When ties overlap in a community, making a person highly integrated into a physical place, he or she is pulled into public life in multiple ways, and civic engagement becomes more likely and more important. (Keely S. Jones, "Giving and Volunteering as Distinct Forms of Civic Engagement: The Role of Community Integration and Personal Resources in Formal Helping", 2006; <http://nvs.sagepub.com/content/35/2/249.full.pdf+html>)

4) Notice Priority - CNCS prioritizes veterans and military families as an interest group to support through national service. POL's AmeriCorps program positively impacts and improves the quality of life of military families. Military families are the lead beneficiaries of this program as it focuses on training family members as volunteer leaders as a reintegration tactic. They are positioned to engage

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and serve their communities and bring value to communities by addressing community needs. The outcomes of this program are that a community need is addressed through the leadership of military families, military families demonstrate an increased ease in integration into the community, and military families and communities are strengthened together. This program supports and expands existing community resources through personal investment. By training this exceptional group, we unleash the untapped potential of military families but also provide them with an experience that becomes a critical part of their reintegration process.

5) Member Training - To initiate group development and cohesiveness, all members participate in our annual Corps Training Institute (CTI). Focusing on experiential learning, skill and team building, we facilitate relationships that reinforce Points of Light's National Service identity and build morale. The CTI is the first module of our member development series to build a set of core competencies sought-after for the service term and life after AmeriCorps: Planning, Managing, Collaboration, Mentoring, Visioning, Interpersonal Communication, Audacity, Motivation/ Mobilizing, Decision Making, and Facilitation. Corps members demonstrating proficiency in these skills shall earn the Points of Light Service Leader Certificate. This credential is highly recognized within the nonprofit sector and our global network of affiliates and partners. In addition to the service leader competencies, Corps Members will receive training on how to be a successful volunteer leader in preparation to train the participants within the program. This training will include how to conduct a community needs assessment, volunteer training workshops, and a local service project.

The second module of learning occurs at the host site. Members will spend a minimum of two weeks in on-site orientation and training designed specifically by the operating site. The corps members will continue to hone facilitation skills as they learn to work within the site level culture of engaging diverse communities, managing partnerships, and recruiting and training volunteer leaders. Host sites will submit an On Site Orientation Training plan for corps members. Continued member development is provided by Points of Light's National Service Unit (NSU) in collaboration with the AmeriCorps Alums and state service commissions resources. The NSU will connect current corps members to the AmeriCorps Alums network and resources through monthly webinars (i.e. career coaching, effective networking, service opportunities), local networking opportunities and other services to increase the value of the national service experience at POL.

Training will also take place within the Military Initiatives department. The members will participate in monthly professional development sessions that will include discussions on professional communication, conflict in the workplace, volunteer management, and life after AmeriCorps. These

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sessions as well as the periodic coaching and site visits will ensure that all corps members share the same experience and are trained to best serve the volunteers that they are engaging with on a routine basis.

The corps member CTI curriculum consists of AmeriCorps rules and regulations, volunteer management, issue-area training, as well as sessions that link the mission of AmeriCorps to active citizenship and civic engagement. A copy of the member code of conduct is provided to and signed by every corps Members which reiterates the prohibited activities.

6) Member Supervision - All host site supervisors attend an intensive training during CTI designed to provide the necessary skills to support member development and impact throughout the year. (Topics include: AmeriCorps Provisions and Regulations, Coaching for Performance, Leading Diversity in the Workplace, and Providing Effective Feedback). To support effective management at the host site, we require supervisors to lead bi-weekly meetings with their corps members (minimum) to identify programmatic challenges and successes and support the execution of the individual member development plans-reinforcing our goal of ensuring the term is as a year-long professional development opportunity. Site supervisors are also required to provide an orientation on POL AmeriCorps and the National Service Movement to all key staff members at the operating organization and service locations. A facilitator's guide will be provided to each site as part of the on-boarding process to ensure all critical areas are articulated. All staff orientations are required to occur prior to the Corps Member start date.

7) Member Experience - Corps members will acquire skills such as leadership, training, and communication which are relished in the employment sector making them more marketable to employers at the conclusion of their term of service. Points of Light will connect host sites with their local state service commission and, where possible, other Points of Light National Service Programs. Host sites will be encouraged to develop collaborative projects during national days of service and AmeriCorps Week. As one of the few national organizations deploying collective impact as a strategy, we will support our local programming to find connection opportunities for the corps members and their activities.

Throughout the year best practices and reflections from members are gathered and shared on social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter and highlighted on the Points of Light blogs. Our social media channels enable us to share innovative solutions, problem solve, recognize the work of members, and surface support from community stakeholders. We have established resource and training collaboration with other local programs and alumni that will support favorable outcomes in

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member retention and prepare corps members to launch their next steps after the service term.

The Corps Training Institute will be the first event in which Corps members have the opportunity to establish connections with each other and to build esprit de corps. The connection with AmeriCorps Alums will continue to build this camaraderie during the professional development seminars.

Points of Light's team-based model deploys members to provide the vital human resources to increase community impact. The POL host sites submit a member recruitment plan during the host site selection process. Local host sites will identify strategies to recruit corps members from within the communities they serve and build a team with existing affinities or existing community connections. We believe this strategy will enable better retention and develops a sense of camaraderie with the National Service Movement than service alone. POL will also assist with recruitment by connecting host sites with local schools, service partners, community job boards, and social media channels. POL is establishing a central portal for national service on the Points of Light website that will us to collect interest in the program and direct the potential applicant to the proper host site.

8) Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification - To further enhance the member experience and identity, all corps members receive a set of member gear at the beginning of the term which contains a minimum of one polo shirt, one AmeriCorps t-shirt, and two AmeriCorps lapel pins for daily wear. POL also issues standard templates for printing business cards, email signatures, and talking points for communicating with the public and corps members are required to AmeriCorps paraphernalia daily. The 2015 CTI will be held in tandem with the POL National Conference on Service and Volunteerism and will culminate with a graduation ceremony which includes reciting the AmeriCorps pledge. In previous years, the pledge was led by a local AmeriCorps Alum or the Executive Director of AmeriCorps Alums. All members participate in our annual Corps Training Institute (CTI). Focusing on experiential learning, skill and team building, the 2.5 day training facilitates relationships that reinforce Points of Light's National Service identity and the term as part of the National Service Movement. The POL host sites submit a community outreach plan during the host site selection process. Community outreach is necessary to communicate the new or expanding programs and services and this will occur within the first quarter of the program and continue throughout the service year. Host sites are encouraged to highlight corps members on their website and social media channels.

### Organizational Capability

POINTS OF LIGHT AND CNCS IN PARTNERSHIP - Points of Light is the world's leading volunteer organization with more than 20 years of history and a bipartisan presidential legacy. Our mission is to

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inspire, equip and mobilize people to take action that changes the world. We connect people to their power to make a meaningful difference by providing access to tools, resources and opportunities to help volunteers use their time, talent, voice and money to meet the critical needs of our communities.

In partnership with CNCS over time, we have created sustainable social capital by training thousands of volunteer leaders and by bringing together citizens to tackle problems and revitalize the civic life of their communities. Over the years, Points of Light's ongoing partnership with CNCS has significantly enhanced our citizen engagement efforts through a range of successful partnerships. Points of Light is currently managing several additional AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA programs across the country. We have also deployed other CNCS volunteer mobilization resources such as 9/11 and Martin Luther King Day of Service grants. In previous years, President and Mrs. Obama, and Vice President Biden and Dr. Biden, participated in our D.C.-based MLK service event.

### Staffing and Organization Structure

Our national staff is defined by a strong and vibrant leadership team guided by President Tracy Hoover, who has been a leader in the service movement for nearly 20 years. Points of Light's Programs division builds and scales signature programs to address critical needs and build stronger communities. The program will reside in this division.

Responding to a sense of urgency expressed by the country's leading veteran-serving non-profits, Points of Light created its programs to help communities mobilize people to address the wide ranging and critical needs of returning military personnel as they reintegrate into civilian life.

We began with the Community Blueprint. In June 2011, following a convening at White Oak, an advisory council composed of representatives of many of the nation's leading nonprofits invited Points of Light to lead a new joint project, the Community Blueprint. The new Points of Light AmeriCorps program was designed in partnership and consultation with some of these Community Blueprint partners: The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University and the National Military Family Association.

The new Points of Light AmeriCorps program will be directed by Janaia DeShields, Vice President of Veterans and Military Programs, a West Point graduate, a veteran, and an experienced nonprofit leader having served at The Mission Continues prior to transitioning to Points of Light. Emily Flanagan will serve as a Program Manager to further support the implementation and management of this new program. Emily brings personal experience as a former AmeriCorps members and former Peace Corps member. She has supported Points of Light Military Initiatives and the Veteran Leaders Corps for nearly two years. The Program Manager will serve as the day-to-day facilitator of

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programmatic activities and efforts. The Program Manager will be the liaison and primary point of contact for Corps Members. In addition, Points of Light will hire a Program Coordinator with responsibility for professional development training sessions, support for host site recruitment, special projects coordination, and provision of other supports and resources.

Cross functional support will be provided to the Points of Light AmeriCorps program from various departments within Points of Light, from evaluation and finance functions to Board-level oversight. Brandee Menoher, currently Vice President of Evaluation and Performance Measurement, has managed program evaluations for federal grants at Points of Light for eight years in addition to prior experience at Georgia State University, Georgia Department of Education and the United States Department of State.

Points of Light's fiscal oversight is led by the CFO, Monique Saunders Patrick, who brings a portfolio of senior level finance experience in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Since a merger and reorganization in 2008, Points of Light has increased its earned revenue to \$4 to \$5 million annually; we have raised more than \$80 million overall, and has managed more than \$30 million in federal grant funds. We also hold more than \$5 million in endowment funds. We have an exceptional record of raising resources from diverse sources, growing that funding over time and raising matching funds for federal grants. We consistently surpass match requirements for these funds, which typically range from 30% to 70% of the total project budget. Total funding from the corporate sector, private foundations, individuals and government has steadily risen over the past several years, despite the nation's economic challenges. PAST PERFORMANCE - Our Veteran Leaders Corps launched in fall of 2012 with a focus on job readiness and veteran engagement. In 2013, the Corporation for National and Community Service honored Points of Light's Veteran Leader Corps program with a Service Impact Award. We engaged in a continuous improvement process to meet the high expectations set forth for outputs, outcomes, and member recruitment and retention. Points of Light placed 78 Corps members in 18 cities throughout the country-serving nearly 3,000 veterans and engaging over 13,000 volunteers in service opportunities.

Veteran Leader Corps enrollment remained above ninety percent (92%) for the 2013 program year. The VLC service member retention rate has drastically increased as well in comparison to the previous VLC year (50% in 2012). The majority of our early exits are the result of the economic challenges connected with the AmeriCorps living allowance. Corps members across the country- mostly veterans and military spouses- find the hardship too much to bear without a secondary source of income. VLC host sites and POL staff are searching sources that would allow us to increase the

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living allowance for locations with a higher cost of living. Additionally, we are encouraging qualified VLC members to seek out the resources available within their Community Blueprint Coalition.

We faced challenges meeting the requirements for host site reporting, but we have developed a number of incentives for member reports to increase their interest in the program which include but are not limited to: featured profiles on Points of Light social media outlets, gear competitions, and attending the National Conference on Volunteering and Service. Points of Light has instituted new reporting procedures to ensure accurate accounting of volunteer hours and member engagement.

COMPLIANCE - Points of Light is one of the largest grantees of CNCS, with a history of internal best practices and strong monitoring to ensure compliance with federal regulations. Regarding financial compliance, Julieta Mendoza Cook serves as Lead Finance and Compliance Manager. She has more than 20 years of experience in non-profit financial operations, grant management, monitoring and reporting, budgeting and planning and internal auditing. Julieta will ensure financial compliance including: records maintenance, practices that address regulatory requirements, documentation of expenses and other cash management systems, documentation of matching requirements and strong internal controls. Points of Light has established a Government Grants Compliance Team to review program status, reporting requirements and grants progress; this is coordinated by Julieta and sits in the Finance Department. The team, which includes program managers from each federally funded program, the CFO, President of Programs, and the VP of Foundation and Government funding, ensures compliance with CNCS rules and regulations.

Points of Light has re-established a National Service Unit (NSU) to develop and provide standard operating procedures, including compliance monitoring, for all Points of Light AmeriCorps National Direct and VISTA programs. This unit is led by Traymone Deadwyler, new Sr. Manager of National Service at Points of Light. Tray has 11 years of National Service experience including NCCC and American Red Cross NPRC in addition to Points of Light and its network. Tray's National Service Unit work is supervised by Stephanie Armelin, Director of Program Operations and Initiatives.

The National Service Unit will support objectivity and neutrality, and will also serve a role similar to that of an internal CNCS Program Officer by supporting the Points of Light program managers. Tray will field compliance-related and programmatic questions and assist with strategy. We intend for this to alleviate technical assistance calls to CNCS program officers on the part of less experienced staff. Tray will also provide standard training modules for staff, supervisors and members on AmeriCorps provisions, regulations, and statutes, delivered during the Corps Training Institutes and reiterated during monthly check-in calls and monitoring.

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The program team will implement a plan for maintaining regular contact with host sites, communicating expectations, providing training and technical assistance, holding host sites accountable through monitoring and oversight and developing a strong site network. Site agreements (MOUs) outline the terms of each host site's participation in the AmeriCorps program. The agreements will include expectations, responsibilities and consequences for non-compliance, number of AmeriCorps serving under the contract, organizational match requirements, position descriptions, program-specific policies and references to AmeriCorps Regulations and Provisions.

Program Managers will connect with host site supervisors monthly to identify successes, challenges and any possible compliance risks. A synopsis of the check-in will be placed in the host site file to assist in tracking progress and compiled as a component of our desk-based monitoring. Points of Light staff will also review submitted documentation (e.g. member files, monthly progress synopses) and completes a risk assessment for each host site. Formal monitoring on the part of the program team will take the form of either a desk review or on-site visit. Our standard tools were established by amalgamating CNCS monitoring tools and Points of Light best practices. The typical desk review is an abbreviated monitoring review for the program year. Sites selection for on-site monitoring will take place through the compliance and programmatic risk assessment. A synopsis of the check-in is placed in the host site file to assist in tracking progress and compiled as a component of our desk-based monitoring. Desk review and risk assessments utilized to determine our on-site monitoring schedule and priority list. On-site monitoring visits will be scheduled at least thirty days prior to date of arrival and conducted within two business days onsite. Points of Light staff will schedule meeting times with the host site's Executive Director, AmeriCorps Members, site supervisors, finance staff (where applicable) and, when possible, clients/ beneficiaries and host partners supporting program implementation. Points of Light staff members will review the member file review (where applicable); fiscal documentation (where applicable); and programmatic data documentation. To capture more qualitative data, Points of Light staff will conduct interviews with a sampling of beneficiaries, volunteers and partners. Points of Light staff will conclude the monitoring visit with an exit meeting to discuss any particular findings, successes and challenges with the appropriate staff. To complete the monitoring process, Points of Light staff will submit a written report to the host site describing any findings and recommendations for improvements. The host site will submit their response and corrective action plan (if applicable) within thirty (30) days of receipt. Most corrective actions are to be completed within sixty-days of submission. Points of Light staff will support and closely monitor the host site during the corrective action process-providing training and technical

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assistance when necessary. Host sites failing to complete the necessary corrective actions may be prohibited from hosting corps members during the subsequent program year (1 year suspension). Rare case of egregious compliance infractions (misuse of corps members, fraud, discrimination, abuse of power, member grievance filing) a three year suspension is imposed.

We will work with the CNCS state offices to ensure they are aware of our Points of Light AmeriCorps program structure and resources. We will reach out to these offices with our service site locations and member contacts to ensure members are made aware of local, state and regional events and training opportunities. In addition, we will request a list of other service sites, so that our members and host sites supervisors can notify other AmeriCorps members of opportunities for engagement at their organization. We will connect Points of Light AmeriCorps members to national service days such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and AmeriCorps week. In addition, where there is overlap in service areas, there may be the opportunity to engage some beneficiaries of other AmeriCorps programs in this STEM AmeriCorps program and vice-versa.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

COST EFFECTIVENESS - Please note updated budget narrative in Clarifications.

The overall budget for the Points of Light AmeriCorps program is \$789,325. The \$13,219 cost per corps member is at the maximum allowable amount. We feel that this is a worthy investment; our success reduce a number of societal costs and the ultimate outcome is priceless - healthy, vibrant veteran families engaged in the community.

We are requesting \$396,572 from the Corporation for National and Community Service. This grant would represent 1% of POL's overall budget. The remaining \$392,753 required to implement the program and match CNCS funds will come from private sources, representing a match of 50% (an increase in our match over last year). Points of Light is confident that we will be able to secure the financial resources to support the required matching funds for the Points of Light AmeriCorps program. Organizationally, corporations have been eager to support our veterans work. We are in conversation with UPS, Lockheed, Boeing, USAA, Bank of America, Northrop Grumman, and CarMax. While dollars are not yet earmarked for AmeriCorps programming, we believe there is ample corporate interest in successful veteran reintegration and family strengthening interventions. Our dedicated corporate development and foundation development staff intends to pursue additional funds to support this work. We will also engage our Board Development Committee. Each partner that is

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selected as a host site will share the cost of member living expenses and all related costs. We expect the level of investment in these members will support higher quality recruitment and retention efforts at the local level.

**BUDGET ADEQUACY** - The Points of Light AmeriCorps budget was carefully developed directly from the program design, to balance quality program delivery with cost effective operation. As an innovative and impact driven program, significant investment will be made to ensure that members are fully trained and supported. Investment will be made in member development, local member supervision support and evaluation. A significant 10% investment in external evaluation efforts will continue our evaluation process and provide detailed information on the effectiveness and efficiency of each program element, with careful attention to refining and replicating the model. The budget reflects the support of a cross-functional staff team of organizational experts based primarily in high cost centers, DC and Atlanta. We've budgeted reasonable costs for these markets, and this staff team, together, will enable significant programmatic development efforts, impact-driven evaluation efforts, highly effective member and supervisor training, and grant compliance. These investments are important to the success of individual AmeriCorps members, the program as a whole and the impact at the community level; they are adequately budgeted based on our past experience with AmeriCorps programming. Overall, a majority of total expenses will go to support the members themselves.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

Please note updated Performance Measures, data collection and descriptions in Performance Measures screens - as requested via Clarifications.

**Theory of Change** -The Points of Light AmeriCorps program will address the need of military family reintegration through the training and mobilization of military families as volunteer leaders in their local communities. POL will deploy a team of 50 AmeriCorps members who will serve half-time terms of service. We will partner with up to 20 host sites to host AmeriCorps member teams for 11 months. AmeriCorps members will identify and engage veteran family units and provide them with the guidance and support required to a) conducting a community needs assessment, b) lead volunteers in service, and c) design and manage a capstone service project. During their service period AmeriCorps members will recruit and manage three cohorts, comprised of military families in the three core program activities. Members will be responsible for recruiting a minimum of four family units per cohort for a total of 24 participants during their term of service to participate in each of the

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core program activities. The program is designed to support the entire family unit and is inclusive of school-aged children. Each cohort will complete a service project as their final volunteer leader training requirement. At the culmination of the AmeriCorps service periods, members will conduct a capstone community service project in which they will invite all former family volunteers to participate.

AmeriCorps members will have eight weeks to complete one cohort of required volunteer training and a local service project. Over the course of the 8 weeks, cohorts will receive 10 hours of formal classroom volunteer training and will participate in 2 hours of reflection outside of the training. The first week will consist of the AmeriCorps members conducting a needs assessment for their local communities to identify the most pressing need in their community. This need does not have to be reflective of military challenges. After the AmeriCorps members identify the greatest need for their communities, they will spend the next five weeks completing Volunteer Leader Training workshops for military families. Military families will have the option of when to attend two-5 hour Volunteer Leader Training sessions and will be asked to return on the service project day for project execution. The final two weeks of the cohort will consist of the AmeriCorps members finalizing the logistics for the project and with the Military Families and additional community volunteers executing the service project. The goal is for each cohort to recruit an additional 50 community volunteers for their service project. At the completion of each cohort, AmeriCorps members will spend two weeks planning and recruiting for the next cohort. The program year will result in 50 AmeriCorps members training 1,200 service members, veterans, and military families as volunteer leaders and mobilizing 7,500 volunteers in service for a total of 8,700 community members engaged.

**OUTCOMES** - The following short term and intermediate outcomes will be measured through the evaluation: Increased knowledge of volunteer leadership principles and practices; Civilian/Community volunteers participating in service projects with Military and Veteran families demonstrate increased awareness of military reintegration issues; Military and Veteran families participants demonstrate increased community embeddedness; Military and Veteran families participants demonstrate increased sense of community & sense of belonging; Civilians/community members demonstrate increased positive perceptions of Military and Veteran families.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS** - To what extent does veterans and military family members' program participation contribute to increased knowledge of volunteer leadership principles and practices? How does family functioning and community reintegration status influence the participants experience in and completion of the program? What factors contribute to strongest gains on constructs of

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community embeddedness, sense of belonging and sense of community? How does participation in service projects influence changes in perceptions of Military and Veteran families for civilians/community member volunteers?

**DESIGN** - The evaluation design will be a one-group pretest-posttest design focused primarily on program participants (adults and youth). Data relevant to short- and medium-term outcomes will be gathered from participants at the point of program application, at program completion, and 6 months following completion. In addition, data relevant to program outputs and fidelity of implementation will be gathered regularly during program participation. Data also will be gathered from family volunteers at the completion of service projects.

**DATA COLLECTION METHODS** - Data will be gathered via surveys administered electronically or on paper. Pretest data will be gathered as part of program registration on an online form. Posttest and follow-up data will be gathered via surveys distributed electronically to participants at the appropriate time (at program exit and 6 months following). Data will be gathered from family volunteers via machine-readable paper-and-pencil forms.

**MEASURES** - At pretest, data to be gathered from participants will include demographic characteristics, military history and experiences, psychological well-being, quality of family functioning, and community reintegration status and perceptions. At posttest and follow-up, data to be gathered from participants will include quality of family functioning, and community reintegration status and perceptions. Data to be gathered from family volunteers will include understanding of and attitudes about military/veteran families. Demographic characteristics to be measured will include age, education, sex, marital status and family structure, and work history. Military history and experiences to be measured include branch and years of service, final paygrade, occupational specialty, deployment history, and exposure to combat-related traumatic experiences. Psychological well-being will be assessed using the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen), the Patient Health Questionnaire-8 (Kroencke), the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, and the Post Traumatic Stress Checklist. Quality of family functioning will be assessed using the McMaster Family Assessment Device. Each participating member in the program participant family will complete this measure. Reintegration status will be assessed the Military to Civilian Questionnaire (Sayer et al). Community reintegration perceptions will be assessed using the Neighborhood Collective Efficacy: Community Cohesion and Informal Social Control scale; the Sense of Community Index; the Community Embeddedness scale; the Community Capacity scale (adapted from Bowen), and the Post-Deployment Social Support Assessment (Vogt). Attitudes about military and veteran families will be

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assessed using items drawn from the General Social Survey.

ANALYSES - Analyses of participant data will be conducted using longitudinal multi-level modelling. Participants will be grouped by trainer, and family volunteers will be grouped by the program participants who recruited them. Analyses will assess the degree to which individuals display change over time in the outcomes of interest; the degree to which groups of participants differ across locations; and the degree to which individuals within groups of participants differ from one another. In addition, analyses will assess the degree to which individuals' change over time is a function of their characteristics at the outset of the program, or of their experience of the program (e.g., the focus of their service project).

EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS AND BUDGET - The Points of Light intends to invest \$65,000 to engage the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University to implement a third party evaluation. One of the 25 best public universities in the nation according to U.S. News and World Report, Purdue University receives over 3,000 externally funded awards for research each year. The proposed project will receive outstanding support from excellent facilities and an experienced staff that includes professionals specializing in research, outreach, communication, and external relations, as well as an extensive support team that includes financial, information technology, and clerical staff. Since 2000, the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) has amassed extensive experience conducting research, engagement and outreach touching all branches and components of the U.S. military. More importantly, MFRI has developed expertise in conducting studies using a wide variety of data collection and analytic techniques, demonstrating that MFRI has the experience and expertise to design and conduct large evaluation projects of national scope for a variety of audiences. MFRI also has a significant history of successful collaborations with military, government, educational, and nonprofit organizations.

### Amendment Justification

n/a

### Clarification Summary

A. Our initial proposal requested \$13,219.07 per member. Points of Light has made line item changes to the budget as requested and also lowered the CNCS share in some areas, resulting in CNCS cost per MSY totaling just \$12,814. This represents a decrease in expenses compared to Points of Light's Veteran Leaders Corps for which CNCS has contributed \$13,227 per member. A majority of our costs are fixed and we are unable to reduce expenses further.

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B. Confusion related to our chosen performance measures may be due to the nomenclature. In our work with veterans, the terms military member and military families are inclusive of veterans and veterans families. And therefore, we hoped to chose a measure that was broadly inclusive. Our program model will be engage veterans, veterans families, active duty military and active duty military families.

In this second round of clarifications, with an understanding of CNCS nomenclature, we believe that we have correctly represented our primary focus on veterans family members - and this is the group around which we will be reporting our outputs and outcomes related to both interventions. There are existing programs that engage veteran and military members in service and Points of Light's primary objective to expand upon the existing service models to build stronger families and help them get connected.

We have also clarified that our pre-post survey instrument will track an unduplicated count of veterans family members for each unique intervention. Each family member will have a unique identifier given to them to use for survey completion. Surveys will be matched by the unique identifier to ensure there is not a duplication in survey respondents. We are confident that we have designed a program that will allow us to achieve our output and outcome targets without duplication.

C. We have requested 50 AmeriCorps members, 10 fulltime and 40 parttime members, for our 2015 program year. We will allocate 10 positions (2 FT slots and 16 PT slots), or 20% of our 50 total member slots, to members with disabilities. Points of Light is currently in the exploration phase with the National Disability Institute to identify ways to utilize our AmeriCorps members to support their current programming within local Vet Centers. Our program model will support the Centers' needs as well as establish a new recruitment channel to reach potential new members with disabilities. We will also leverage our current partnerships within our Community Blueprint Advisory Council - 18 leading veteran service/ serving organizations - to recruit disabled veterans and volunteers to support the program model. POL will also seek to build relationships with the Veterans Affairs and the Special Olympics as a recruitment method and opportunity to engage the disabled community in continued service. We will require that sites requesting multiple AmeriCorps members deploy strategies to recruit at least one person with a qualifying disability. We will encourage current and prior members with

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disabilities to share their stories in order to attract new members to the program. POL will draw on prior experience and provide support to host organizations as they evaluate their ability to host strategic engagement members and arrange reasonable accommodations for members where necessary. We will continue to provide support and oversight so that job responsibilities are divided between members at each site based on their strengths. We believe that the work plans and service descriptions for our AmeriCorps program will offer the necessary flexibility for strategic engagement members. As mentioned, our partnering host sites are well-positioned to identify local resources to support retention of members with disabilities. We will facilitate sharing and support among these members across locations as well.

Because we are refining our initial request, not increasing our request, the decision to commit to 10 strategic engagement slots does not alter our performance measures, MSY allocations, or budget.

D. We are not requesting No-Cost MSYs.

### Continuation Changes

n/a

### Grant Characteristics