Executive Summary

The AmeriCorps ACCESS (AmeriCorps Cross Cultural Education Service Systems) Project of the Center for New North Carolinians (CNNC) of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) proposes to have 47 AmeriCorps members who will provide employment coaching and placement services, disaster preparedness education and volunteer recruitment and management in the following counties: Alamance, Buncombe, Craven, Durham, Guilford, Mecklenburg, and Wake. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for providing employment coaching services to 300 economically disadvantaged individuals, placing 150 beneficiaries in jobs, providing 200 individuals with disaster preparedness education of which 150 will demonstrate an increase in knowledge and recruiting 500 unduplicated volunteers, resulting in 4 partner organizations implementing 3 or more effective volunteer management practices. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services and Capacity Building. The CNCS investment of $317,502 will be matched with $277,313 in projected public funding and $41,250 in projected private funding. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 500 volunteers who will be engaged in tutoring children, providing childcare and transportation, assisting with community gardens, providing administrative support, picking up and sorting donated supplies, housing set-up for newly arrived refugees and site maintenance and upkeep.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

a. Problem/Need:
ACCESS selected to serve the immigrant/refugee population for several reasons. First, over the last three decades NC has experienced a dramatic increase of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) speakers. Second, the influx of these groups reduced service providers’ capability to provide meaningful access to services limiting the LEP individual's ability to become self-sufficient. Lastly, AmeriCorps members representing the targeted communities enhance partner agencies' capacity to provide culturally competent service as well as provide leadership opportunities for those members.

NC is ranked 10th nationally for refugee resettlement. According to the NC Refugee Health Program Database (July 2015), the counties of Guilford, Mecklenburg, Durham, Wake, Craven and Buncombe resettled 90% of refugees coming to NC. In 2014, the US Census reported the Hispanic population in Alamance County as 12.1%; 30% higher than the state rate of 9%. Many of the newcomers have special needs due to isolation, language and cultural barriers and war trauma. NC rural and urban
Narratives

areas are facing a dramatic shift in demographics with new immigrants in need of human services and constructive integration into local communities. With local communities lacking culturally and linguistically appropriate resources to respond to these newcomers, however these new populations have historically needed job training and placement, interpretation and awareness of community resources. These resources include disaster preparedness education and the agencies who serve them have needed increased capacity to meet these needs.

Employment: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of August 2015 the national unemployment rate was 5.1%, and in NC it was 5.9%. Refugees are resettled without jobs or information on how to obtain jobs. Thus, employment remains one of the most recognized problems for immigrants entering host-country labor markets. For immigrants, especially those who are newly arrived, there is a lack of institutional know-how, as well as needed contacts to assist with securing employment. Immigrants are in need of intensive employment counseling and coaching to assist them with gaining employment (Joona & Nekby, 2012). In addition, learning English is an important part of both gaining employment and integrating into the community. Most English language programs provide immigrants with basic English survival skills but often fail to provide effective language skills needed in the workplace. Language classes offer work-focused language instruction in various forms, such as, classes that are occupation or industry-specific, workplace-based, or employer-specific have demonstrated the most success among immigrant learners. Work-focused language training is integrated with other services, such as, mentoring, job-search assistance and cultural orientation which can mitigate employment barriers for immigrants (McHugh & Challinor, 2011).

Disaster Preparedness: Emergency preparedness is an important issue in all communities. Vulnerable populations need additional assistance in learning to prepare for disasters. Limited English-proficient populations are some of the most vulnerable community members due to barriers in effective communication during emergencies such as language, cultural, technological and logistics (Ambroslo, Huang, & Kwan-Gett, 2014). While emergencies in North Carolina vary widely, communities face common challenges in understanding, preparing for and responding to disasters. Previous research has suggested that residents may not be fully aware of how their county's emergency management office plans for and responds to emergencies, and may do little, if any, disaster preparedness. This lack of planning and limitations in understanding may be most critical for socially vulnerable populations, such as, those with limited English proficiency, who typically have concerns relating to language and financial difficulties, lack of knowledge, difficulty understanding complex logistics and apathy or lack
Narratives

of sense of vulnerability (Shay, et. al., 2014).

Capacity Building: Studies have shown that a large number of nonprofit agencies have reported they lacked adequate staff to deliver services, while staff at these organizations report having additional job responsibilities. Although there is some cost involved, volunteers can stretch the limited resources of agencies and increase service capacity. Ineffective volunteer programs have been linked with ineffective management practices, such as, poor or limited training. Effective volunteer management strategies, such as, proper screening, assigning, training and monitoring of volunteers can make volunteers more effective enhancing their satisfaction which helps to increase retention; thus reducing agency costs and increasing agency capacity (Vinton, 2012). Managing volunteer resources is an essential part for successful nonprofit agencies. Assigning volunteers to correct positions and providing them with professional development opportunities is a vital aspect of managing volunteers, which increases the effectiveness of both the volunteer and the agency. Another significant part of managing volunteers is the recognition aspect to help volunteers feel appreciated (Backer, Allen, & Bonilla, 2012). While several partner agencies will have members engage in volunteer recruitment, ACCESS's goal is to have at least 4 of these agencies develop 3 or more CNCS-identified effective volunteer management practices to increase the overall effectiveness of services delivered. Part of the member's role is to assist with managing the volunteers recruited for these agencies. Specifically volunteers will tutor children, provide childcare and transportation, assist with community gardens, provide administrative support, sort donated supplies, assist with housing set-up, and site maintenance.

b. Theory of Change and Logic Model

AmeriCorps members will be trained to provide employment coaching services to 300 unduplicated economically disadvantaged individuals, place 150 beneficiaries in jobs, provide 200 individuals with disaster preparedness education, of which 150 will demonstrate an increase in knowledge. Members will also recruit 500 unduplicated volunteers whose role is to enhance capacity building for the partner agencies. AmeriCorps members will implement 3 or more effective volunteer management practices for at least 4 partner agencies, making those agencies more efficient in the services that they provide. Research suggests that employment coaching services increases the likelihood of employment by 43% and that the workplace-focused language training is crucial to attaining economic self-sufficiency for immigrants. Studies, such as those by Ambroslo, Huang, & Kwan-Gett, 2014 and Shay, et. al., 2014, show a high number of vulnerable populations including immigrants and refugees in NC are not well-prepared to respond to disaster situations and can benefit from
disaster preparedness education. Populations who receive disaster preparedness education are better able to respond to emergency situations. Culturally and linguistically appropriate preparedness education is essential to achieve desired results. Well-managed volunteer programs, namely those that implement effective management strategies, increase the organizational capacity of non-profit agencies. The ACCESSS program is unique in that the members will be providing culturally and linguistically appropriate service and will be recruiting some volunteers from the communities that they serve.

c. Evidence Base

Employment Intervention: In Intensive Coaching of New Immigrants: An Evaluation Based on Random Program Assignment (2012), Pernilla A. Joona conducted a study of improving employment outcomes of newly arrived adult immigrants from 2006 to 2008. The study used a random assignment of 70% of newly arrived adult immigrants in the treatment group and 30% in the control group in three different geographical counties. Data was collected from the 953 participants in the treatment group (74%) and 335 in the control group regarding subsidized employment, regular education and public employment service caseworkers. The study indicated that at the end of the observation period, participants in the treatment group (those receiving intensive coaching) demonstrated a higher probability of being regularly employed. This study presents strong findings of the significant treatment effects with the use of intensive coaching on employment. Those receiving coaching services showed higher employment rates as well. Intensive coaching services included job search activities, validation of foreign credentials, courses on interview techniques and how to write job applications and workforce training. Intensive coaching improved employment chances by 43% and had a positive causal impact on employment rates. There is evidence that intensive coaching can be beneficial for new immigrants, who may otherwise lack the institutional know-how and contacts to quickly secure employment in host countries.

In Improving Immigrants' Employment Prospects through Work-Focused Language Instruction (2011), Margie McHugh and A.E. Challinor conducted literature review of 23 studies ranging from 1996-2011 regarding the effect of language learning on immigrants seeking employment. These studies suggest workplace-focused language training programs are most effective when they provide language instruction that is contextualized for the workplace. This study presents preliminary evidence. Workplace-focused English language training is essential to the long-term self-sufficiency and economic success of immigrants.

ACCESS proposes to have members complete training in employment coaching and placement.
Narratives

services, including vocational language training, designed specifically to meet the needs of the immigrants/refugees in job attainment. Members will provide culturally competent services to clients including, but not limited to: case management, transportation, job applications, computer training, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.

Disaster Preparedness: In Assessing Disaster Preparedness of Officials and Residents in Two North Carolina Counties (2014), Elizabeth Shay, Tabitha Combs, David Salvesen, Diane De Trizio, and Jennifer A. Horney conducted a study of county managers interviewed emergency managers and emergency service providers and surveyed resident households to improve understanding about the gap in disaster preparedness from August to December 2012. This study found awareness of communication barriers between emergency managers and residents when residents had little knowledge of when to evacuate, how to maintain safe water and sanitation and how to prepare property for a disaster. This study presents preliminary findings. Results indicated that 27.2% respondents had experienced a disaster while living in Alamance County, NC, though only 8.5% had ever been evacuated; 75.2% felt their homes were vulnerable to tornadoes and 65.2% vulnerable to hurricanes; 41% felt vulnerable to winter storms, droughts, or heatwaves, and 26% to earthquakes. Less than 50% of respondents knew where they would go in the event of a disaster, and only 30% had a designated family meeting location for emergencies. Only 50.9% had an emergency supply kit. Vulnerable populations can be particularly hard to reach and to communicate with about disasters. Some may be reluctant to use the services available or register with authorities. Improving communication between vulnerable populations and service providers may be one way to effectively increase household preparedness. Increased resident preparedness should increase the effectiveness and efficiency of emergency response after a disaster and, most importantly, reduce the impact of disasters on residents as well.

In Evidence-Based Communication Strategies: NWPERLC Response to Training on Effectively Reaching Limited English-Speaking (LEP) Populations in Emergencies (2014), Luann D'Ambrosio, Claire E. Huang, and Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett conducted a training needs assessment of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health’s preparedness workforce and initiatives in 2011. A web-based survey was used to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities of LA county staff in communicating and working with LEP communities to promote emergency preparedness. Study findings indicated that respondents wanted to receive further training, rated training series as very good, and reported confidence in their knowledge and skills based on pre-course and post-course surveys. This study presents preliminary findings. Reaching at-risk populations requires the use of multiple channels,
Narratives

formats, and tools. Many useful themes that emerged are as follows: define and locate LEP communities, get to know these communities through their community-based organizations, involve community liaisons in preparedness planning, build strong ties with ethnic media, make sure preparedness messages and official plans are culturally and contextually appropriate, translate emergency messages prior to an emergency, create a plan for professional interpreters and community members to interpret in time of emergency, use community members and community-based organizations for outreach in time of emergency, train medical interpreters and community health promoters in emergency preparedness/response, pictorial directions in emergency preparedness materials and in disaster announcements are good for many groups—including LEP communities. ACCESS proposes to have members complete disaster preparedness & response trainings, translate disaster-related materials and provide disaster preparedness workshops for immigrants and refugees. Capacity Building -- Volunteer Recruitment and Management: In Identifying and Learning from Exemplary Volunteer Resource Managers: A Look at Best Practices in Managing Volunteer Resources (2012), Joseph A. Allen and Daniel L. Bonilla interviewed exemplary volunteer resource managers and gathered best practices for improving volunteer management programs. The study did not indicate an exact time period for the data collection. From the interviews, results identified best practices in six key areas of volunteer management, including: commitment, recognition, satisfaction with communication, perception of voice, competence and contribution, burnout and intentions to quit. This study’s findings argue that focusing on one to three areas and implementing those practices will have a strong impact on the organization. These are preliminary findings. Results indicate that volunteer coordinators should provide volunteers: extensive orientation training, feedback regarding their direct contribution to the organization, and job-specific learning opportunities. Volunteer coordinators should also provide volunteers with the opportunity to work independently and have increased responsibility.

In Professional Administrations of Volunteer Programs Now More Than Ever: A Case Example (2011), Linda Vinton examined volunteer programs at two community based agencies that employed professional volunteer coordinators using an evaluation methodology. Data was collected via computerized databases (volunteer demographics, training hours, service hours, number of clients served, & value of service hours) and surveys (perceptions of the quality of volunteer experience & impact of volunteer coordinator). The study did not indicate an exact time period for the data collection. Results included: increased number of volunteers due to recruitment efforts; increased number of volunteer service hours, with a positive net value of service hours; and positive volunteer
Narratives

satisfaction. These are preliminary findings. Results indicate that the value of volunteers' services outweighs the cost of having volunteer coordinators. Agencies are able to provide a greater number of services and/or serve a greater number of clients as a result of having well-managed volunteer programs.

ACCESS plans to train members in volunteer recruitment, management and retention and have members implement at least three or more effective volunteer management practices as defined by CNCS.

d. Notice Priority
ACCESS proposes to have AmeriCorps members serving in two of CNCS priority focus areas of Capacity Building and Disaster Services and one complementary focus area of Economic Opportunity targeting newcomers in North Carolina.

e. Member Training
Members attend a two full-day mandatory orientation. On the first day of orientation, member training includes an Introduction to Immigrants/Refugees, Policies/Procedures and Prohibited Activities for members/generated volunteers. At this time, members are informed that they are not allowed to recruit volunteers to perform any of the prohibited activities. ACCESS monitors members/generated volunteers' awareness/adherence to prohibited activities through communication with site supervisors and site visits. Throughout the service year, members will receive trainings on Diversity, Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Professional Interpretation, Employment Coaching & Placement, Volunteer Recruitment, Disabilities, Disaster Preparedness & Response, CPR/First Aid, Cross Cultural Communication, Conflict Resolution, Immigration Law, Citizenship, and Life After AmeriCorps. Also, ACCESS requires partner agencies to provide site orientation to members within their first weeks of service, as well as specific trainings needed to perform service activities. During the volunteer recruitment training, members are reminded that volunteers recruited cannot engage in any prohibited activities. Training is provided by a combination of individuals including the ACCESS Training Coordinator, service providers, and experts in the fields. Trainings vary from two-four hours per topic. Training content is periodically modified based on member feedback and to include updated information. Members have been actively engaged in trainings and have consistently reported in their evaluations that they found information provided at training to be beneficial and relevant to their service.

f. Member Supervision
Members are placed at partner agencies where a designated site supervisor has been identified by the
Narratives

agency and undergone the required CNCS background checks. ACCESS requires the site supervisor attend an orientation prior to the member start date where they will receive training on AmeriCorps regulations, priorities, and expectations, including site supervisor/member roles, prohibited activities, documentation and expectations. Direct supervision, guidance and support are provided to members by site supervisors at the partner agencies. Site supervisors are identified by the partner agency and are typically staff members. These individuals have met their agency education and experience requirement for their respective positions. Currently, we have 9 out of 21 site supervisors continuing in their roles for 3 or more years, 8 out of 21 who were former ACCESS members, and 6 out of 21 serving in either executive director or program manager roles at their agency. Supervisors are required to attend quarterly trainings which cover the following topics: Supervisor Orientation, Member Retention & Support, Member Feedback, Member Appreciation and Member Motivation. Based on ACCESS staff observation over the program years along with member feedback of their supervision experience, each 3-hour training topic is tailored to offer supervisors specific tools to better support and guide members throughout their service year. ACCESS staff conducts site visits with members & supervisors to ensure both are receiving adequate support and guidance and to ensure that the member is receiving quality supervision and support.

g. Member Experience
Members will be placed with non-profit agencies whose missions align with ACCESS goals, based on community needs, partner missions, and member skills and interests. Through their service and training, members will gain experience that will prepare them for future employment. Over the last 3 program years, approximately 25% of the ACCESS members obtained employment in the human services field. To ensure community impact and continued civic participation, ACCESS members participate in "National Identity Days" and special program initiatives to assist target populations through food and clothing drives and ongoing trainings, which reinforce the ethic of service. In addition, members participate in other special statewide activities promoted by the NC Commission, which allows the opportunity for members to network with other AmeriCorps/national service peers. Members are placed in groups and are then responsible for working together to plan and implement service projects. Members will engage in several reflection activities throughout the service year. ACCESS will recruit AmeriCorps members from the geographic and demographic communities in which they serve. Approximately one-half of the members come from the immigrant/refugee community.

h. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification
Narratives

ACCESS promotes positive commitment and identity for members through its program materials and service gear. ACCESS uses the AmeriCorps name on all program materials, including the website, brochures, flyers, letterhead, member curriculum, etc. Members are provided with national service gear and are required to identify themselves as AmeriCorps members at all times when in service by wearing their gear. Members are trained on the first day of orientation to distinguish themselves as AmeriCorps members and not agency staff. As part of the partnership agreement, ACCESS requires all partner agencies to display an AmeriCorps sign in a visible location at the site. ACCESS ensures that sites and members are in compliance with this requirement through periodic site visits.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background and Staffing

In 1994, after a statewide needs assessment conducted by Social Work faculty at University of North Carolina Greensboro in cooperation with refugee/immigrant networks, the NC Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), the Division of Social Services (DSS) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), stakeholders confirmed the need for an AmeriCorps program to facilitate new immigrants' access to human services. Thus, ACCESS became the first AmeriCorps project in North Carolina. Its overall mission is "to help refugees and immigrants and their communities gain better access to human services, build bridges of understanding with their neighbors, and become economically self-sufficient residents of our state." During the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act initiative, CNNC also had a second AmeriCorps grant, which focused on jobs for two refugee communities.

ACCESS is a program of the CNNC which is housed in the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED). This Office is a central hub for UNCG outreach and research. CNNC has strong support through its placement & support systems. As part of UNCG, it operates under UNCG’s Board of Directors and the UNC system’s policies and procedures. The full time ACCESS Director, Khouan Rodriguez, who has a bachelor's degree in sociology, is a refugee from Laos and a former ACCESS member. She has served as the ACCESS Program Director since 2004 and has direct responsibility for the project. Prior to serving as the director, she was the CNNC Office Manager. The ACCESS Training Coordinator, Cynthia Mejia, who has a bachelor's degree in sociology, is an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, she was also an ACCESS member and has previous experience working with the Department of Social Services. She reports to Ms. Rodriguez, directly oversees training, and serves as acting director in Ms. Rodriguez's absence. Janet Johnson, Business Officer/Immigration Program Director of CNNC, has a bachelor's degree in business management.
Narratives

She has fiscal oversight and reporting responsibilities for ACCESS within CNNC. She also works closely with the UNCG Office of Contracts and Grants (C&G) and she has over 30 years administrative experience with federally funded programs related to immigrants/refugees. Dr. Holly Sienkiewicz is the Director of the CNNC. She oversees operations and programmatic evaluation efforts. She has worked in program evaluation for the past 4 years and will serve as the Principal Investigator and evaluator for ACCESS. She was also a previous ACCESS member. Dr. Sienkiewicz reports to Dr. Terri Shelton, Vice Chancellor for ORED at UNCG, and her time dedicated to ACCESS will be used as an in-kind match for the program.

Federal grants management capacity is well established. ACCESS has managed its AmeriCorps grant for 20 years. CNNC has had other federal grants in the past, and is currently participating in other federally funded outreach and UNCG research projects. UNCG managed $13,038,690.00 in federal funds in the 2014 fiscal year. All CNNC funds are managed through the UNCG fiscal management systems of C&G and the Development Office. Plans for providing financial and programmatic orientation are integrated into CNNC and UNCG procedures built on 20 years of successful AmeriCorps management. Training & technical assistance to staff is part of the UNCG and NC Commission ongoing professional development. The Commission sponsors ongoing staff development and training related to AmeriCorps. UNCG provides staff training in fiscal and personnel management.

With the exception of a few sites that are traditional agencies, the majority of ACCESS's partner agencies are grassroots agencies. The current twenty plus partner agencies are central to the work of ACCESS. ACCESS consulted with partner agencies to set program goals and plan interventions for the current proposal to address the needs of their communities. Letters of support are attached. Sustainability: In its 20 years, ACCESS has had 100% success in meeting its match and has also assisted partner agencies in securing funds for their cash match obligations. CNNC has been successful in securing additional funding to support the AmeriCorps project, CNNC is an approved United Way partner agency and receives United Way funding. CNNC also raises funds through its United Way partner relationship and through a special designation in the State Employees Combined Campaign annual fundraising. The UNCG Development Office assists with other fund raising initiatives and some individuals make direct donations to CNNC programs through that system. To assure sustainability and long range impact, UNCG ORED is currently assisting CNNC in publicity and web based promotional activities to help assure ongoing institutional support. Simultaneously, ORED is helping cover some costs of CNNC staff to support ACCESS.
Narratives

b. Compliance and Accountability

ACCESS has an excellent record in compliance and accountability based on 20 years of practice, state and UNCG grants management policies and procedures and thorough systems of training & monitoring within CNNC. CNNC plans for monitoring program and service sites to prevent and detect compliance issues include: providing members and supervisors training on compliance issues, prohibited and unallowable activities and fundraising prior to the member's first day of service; providing members and supervisors with program manuals detailing AmeriCorps rules and regulations; reviewing member and supervisor monthly reports, following up as needed; and conducting site visits for monitoring. ACCESS staff actively seek guidance from the NC Commission in adhering to all AmeriCorps guidelines. In the extremely unlikely case of egregious noncompliance, UNCG can hold the partner agencies legally accountable, based on signed partner agreements between UNCG and ACCESS partner agencies. The CNNC ensures that AmeriCorps member service will not duplicate, displace or supplant volunteers, staff, and/or interns through a comprehensive screening of service sites' AmeriCorps position descriptions and slot allocations.

Enrollment & Retention: In the 2014-15 program year, ACCESS had an enrollment rate of 82% and a retention rate of 89%. Various factors contributed to a lower enrollment rate. There were organizational changes within partner agencies that led to withdrawal of partnership applications leaving ACCESS little time to successfully recruit new agencies with available funding to host open positions. Although ACCESS had a fair amount of applicants (139), there were a limited number of qualified applicants capable of filling the positions. Additionally, a few members who planned on continuing their service term withdrew their applications at the last minute due to personal reasons. Despite extending our enrollment period through the end of the first quarter, ACCESS was still unable to find applicants that were either qualified or willing to commit for the entire service term. In order to improve enrollment, ACCESS has reduced the number of AmeriCorps slots, initiated an effort to recruit new partner agencies, and diversified the program's member recruitment strategies.

Economic hardship and other personal issues contributed to a slightly lower retention rate. To promote retention, ACCESS utilizes various methods of positive reinforcement, such as: an open door policy, demonstrating appreciation by publicly celebrating achievements both personal and professional, and focusing on the significance of the members' roles. ACCESS also provides training to site supervisors on various ways to demonstrate support and appreciation to the members throughout the service year.

Consultation with State Commission: ACCESS staff maintain a good working relationship with the
Narratives

State Commission. ACCESS seeks consultation, as needed, from the State Commission for guidance and technical support on AmeriCorps issues that require clarification.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. Cost Effectiveness

The proposed CNCS Cost per MSY for the planned grant cycle is $12,226, which is considerably lower than the maximum MSY of $13,730 allowed. Over the last five years, ACCESS has received state funding totaling $2,429,409. Comparable costs for FTE (or MSY) positions would begin around $25,000 plus fringe/position.

CNNC organizational funding is derived from: Office of Refugee Resettlement, United Way of Greater Greensboro, Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro, Cone Health Foundation, and UNCG -- Office of Research and Economic Development. In addition, CNNC has two fee-based programs - Interpreter ACCESS and Immigration Services.

Diverse non-federal support is achieved through the projected 18 partner agencies providing cash match. Other resources include local foundations, United Ways, corporate contributions, member positions built into agency operations, & other agency fund raising mechanisms. CNNC and ACCESS also develop their own non-federal support. ACCESS members are budgeted into foundation grant proposals. UNCG contributions underwriting CNNC and ACCESS operations have grown and continue to grow as ACCESS collaborates more closely with the UNCG community economic development and the universities service learning efforts.

Decreased reliance on federal support is reached as ACCESS has increased its match & increased partner agency cash match to help assure commitment. There is also broader collaboration with other CNNC projects & stakeholders within the UNCG system. ACCESS is creating broader community impact through the strategy of increasing partner agency capacity & sustainability.

b. Budget Adequacy

The proposed budget, an increase from the current year, will allow ACCESS to maintain the Trainer/Assistant Director assuring excellent training and administrative execution of program responsibilities. ACCESS has learned through years of experience what a realistic budget is and has been able to leverage more university resources to cover some expenses. CNNC has also successfully integrated other programs into the program design to support ACCESS outreach. New programs and partner agencies can be integrated into ACCESS programs at minimal expense. The statewide target area will also allow ACCESS to solicit funds through statewide networks, serving resource poor communities. The ACCESS program derives $318,563 in cash and in-kind match from non-CNCS
Narratives

The in-kind amount is $163,781 and is derived from: UNCG faculty, fringe & indirect cost; partner agencies (site supervisor salaries, fringe); and program evaluation. The cash match that comes from partner agencies, which is paid out in member stipend & fringe totals $154,782.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Introduction: The AmeriCorps ACCESS program has a part-time, in-kind evaluator that will help with the development and implementation of a comprehensive evaluation. The Director of Research, Dr. Holly Sienkiewicz, at the UNCG Center for New North Carolinians (CNNC) will lead the outcome evaluation in conjunction with the AmeriCorps Program Director, Khouan Rodriguez. A graduate assistant will be assisting with all evaluation efforts. Because the CNNC is applying for less than $500,000 annually in CNCS funds, we are electing to utilize an internal evaluator to conduct the outcome evaluation.

Background: The AmeriCorps ACCESS logic model outlining resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes necessary for successful program implementation will provide a framework for these evaluation efforts. ACCESS evaluation outcomes will be monitored through SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Qualtrics (an electronic survey data collection platform) data forms will be used for data collection when possible. All hard copies of survey and data collection instruments will be entered into an Excel database and uploaded into SPSS by the evaluation team. SPSS will assist the evaluator to generate timely and accurate reports on ACCESS program metrics.

Purpose: The outcome evaluation for the AmeriCorps ACCESS project will be trifold and focus on increasing employment-related knowledge and self-efficacy, disaster preparedness knowledge and self-efficacy, and volunteer recruitment and management for partner agencies. The tools implemented will assist with continuous program monitoring and improvement. The purpose of this evaluation plan is to ensure that the ACCESS Program meets the requirements determined by the CNCS. Proposed project inputs, activities, and outputs can be viewed in more detail in the attached logic model. Employment and disaster preparedness activities are based on the premise that culturally and linguistically-appropriate educational classes and workshops will increase knowledge, self-efficacy, and skills in each respective area. Knowledge, self-efficacy, and skill acquisition are then likely to influence changes in behavior (both immediate and long-term behavior change). In reference to volunteer recruitment and management, human potential is the greatest resource non-profit organizations have. The recruitment of committed individuals will enhance the ability of organizations to serve immigrants and refugees.
Narratives

Audiences and Decisions: Interim evaluation results will be shared with the CNCS and ACCESS program staff annually. Final evaluation results will be available at the end of the three year funding cycle and disseminated to the CNCS, ACCESS staff, and CNNC funders and supporters.

Questions: The outcome evaluation will address the following employment questions to determine program success:
- Does offering culturally and linguistically appropriate employment coaching and placement services increase program participants' knowledge of searching and applying for a job?
- Does offering individual career coaching increase program participants' self-efficacy when searching and applying for a job?
- How many immigrants and refugees participated in employment-related classes and counseling?

The outcome evaluation will address the following disaster-preparedness questions to determine program success:
- Does offering culturally and linguistically appropriate education increase participants' knowledge on how to prepare for a disaster?
- Does offering culturally and linguistically appropriate education increase participants' self-efficacy on how to prepare for a disaster?
- How many immigrants and refugees participated in disaster-preparedness workshops?

The outcome evaluation will address the following volunteer recruitment and management questions to determine program success:
- How many recruiting events do AmeriCorps members conduct in effort to reach prospective volunteers?
- How many volunteers are leveraged by AmeriCorps members?

Of the volunteers leveraged by AmeriCorps members, how many are episodic? How many are ongoing?
- Have partner organizations been able to implement effective volunteer management practices?
To what degree have organizations been able to implement three or more effective volunteer management practices? (process question)

Methods: Evaluation methods differ based on individual performance measures.
Narratives

Employment: Pre/post-tests will be used to assess knowledge and self-efficacy with a minimum of 63 clients participating in career coaching sessions and trainings. At least 63 clients are needed to have a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of 11. The pre/post-test is a true experimental design and the preferred method among researchers when measuring degree of change of an intervention (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Pre-existing measurement tools assessing knowledge and self-efficacy will be tailored specifically for the ACCESS Program’s use prior to the start date of the grant. AmeriCorps members will be trained on assessment forms at orientation prior to administering them with clients. Pre-post data will be analyzed using paired t-tests found in SPSS. Pre-existing intake forms will be used to monitor the number of participants attending career coaching sessions and trainings. These forms will be entered into an Excel database and uploaded into SPSS. The evaluator will then analyze the data using descriptive statistics.

Disaster Preparedness: Pre/post-tests will be used to assess knowledge and self-efficacy of all clients participating in disaster preparedness workshops. Pre-existing measurement tools assessing knowledge and self-efficacy will be tailored specifically for the ACCESS Program’s use prior to the start date of the grant. Data collection and analysis are the same as stated in the employment section above.

Volunteer recruitment and management will be assessed via standard monitoring activities of volunteers and a pre/post-test survey of partner agencies about the implementation of effective volunteer management practices. All volunteers complete a pre-existing application form prior to the commencement of their volunteer activities. Aggregating these forms will allow us to assess the number of volunteers leveraged by AmeriCorps members. Data will then be analyzed and uploaded using SPSS software. Volunteer recruitment events will be monitored and assessed in the same way. The evaluator will distribute a pre/post-test survey to site supervisors at the beginning and end of each year assessing their ability to implement effective volunteer management practices. Quantitative questions will be analyzed in the same way as described above. Content analysis will be used when assessing qualitative questions.

Data Analysis: All data forms will be created and/or tailored for ACCESS users prior to the start of the first fiscal year. Partner agencies and AmeriCorps members will be trained on how to use the forms during their first orientation. Electronic Qualtrics data forms will be used whenever possible. This software allows the evaluator to download quantitative data into an SPSS database. Descriptive statistics will be assessed through SPSS software which is available to CNNC staff through the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Qualitative data will be managed through Atlas.ti.
Narratives

software. Content analysis will then be conducted to help ensure that the AmeriCorps ACCESS project is meeting program requirements.

Limitations: Limitations of this evaluation plan include lack of a non-intervention control group for comparisons. Due to financial constraints we were not able to include control groups into the evaluation design. The pre/post-test research design is experimental though and will allow us to see change attributed to the intervention. Another limitation is that not all partnering agencies implement the exact same employment and career coaching sessions; therefore, we will be able to assess our variables of knowledge and self-efficacy but not necessarily know individual components of the intervention that contributes to change. However, as the number of clients completing pre/post assessments increases, we may eventually have enough statistical power to compare intervention change levels of clients by partner agency.

Timeline & Logistics: Data points will be collected as detailed in the table below. Reports will be submitted to CNCS on an annual basis with a final report to be submitted at the end of year three.

CNNC Director of Research, Dr. Holly Sienkiewicz, will serve as the evaluator on this project. She has seven years of community-based evaluation experience and has expertise in mix-methods analysis. Prior to working at the CNNC, she worked at a research and evaluation center conducting community-based evaluations and needs assessments.

Employment knowledge and self-efficacy assessments will be ongoing throughout the grant period and this activity will be conducted by the AmeriCorps members. Disaster knowledge and self-efficacy assessment will be ongoing throughout the grant period and this activity will be conducted by the AmeriCorps members. Volunteer intake forms will be ongoing throughout the grant period and this activity will be conducted by the AmeriCorps members

Member volunteer recruitment logs will be ongoing throughout the grant period and this will be conducted by the AmeriCorps members.

Volunteer recruitment and management pre-test will take place September 2016, and the post-test will take place in August 2016 and these will be conducted by AmeriCorps site supervisors.

Budget: The proposed evaluation will be provided in-kind by the part-time evaluator and graduate assistant.
Narratives

References

Amendment Justification
N/A

Clarification Summary
A. No changes.

B. Programmatic clarification items:
1. By helping beneficiaries with employment readiness and placement services, AmeriCorps members are building lasting and positive outcomes for clients in that members help them achieve a greater level of self-sufficiency. The skills taught by members help clients learn how to market themselves and navigate the job market in order to obtain and maintain employment and become a contributing member of society. Through teaching English, members help clients reduce communication barriers so that they may better integrate into society. Members also teach clients to be better prepared for disaster situations, which prevents and/or mitigates the risk for the clients in emergencies. AmeriCorps members' capacity building efforts enable the organizations they serve to provide a sustained level of more or better direct services after their service term has ended. By securing volunteers and developing/enhancing volunteer programs, members help agencies to maintain or increase level of direct services. Once the members complete their service, agencies can utilize volunteers recruited by the members to continue to serve clients in a similar capacity.

2. Change was made in Executive Summary.

3. The Executive Summary does not state that AmeriCorps-recruited volunteers will conduct administrative support. However, administrative support is not a CNCS-prohibited activity for AmeriCorps members. The "administrative support" function provided by AmeriCorps-recruited volunteers generally encompasses filing, copying, and managing the front desk. These tasks are inherently important to the day-to-day operations of the organization but not what a majority of their service for AmeriCorps entails.
Narratives

4. Site supervisors are required to provide members with a service site orientation, regular meeting schedule, professional development opportunities, feedback (on quality of work, productivity, professionalism, and knowledge of service activities), leadership opportunities, and team building opportunities.

5. ACCESS budgeted for 60 criminal history checks to account for checks for the 47 member slots and 7 new site supervisors. The additional 6 background checks budgeted for cover possible supervisor changes throughout the service year and any member slots that may be refilled.

6. ACCESS projected to have 17 service site locations. Each service site is required to have at least one site supervisor to provide member supervision. The 7 supervisors mentioned in the Personnel Expenses category of the budget is the projected number of supervisors who will on a regular basis turn in supervisory hours that can be included as in-kind match.

7. To ensure that the AmeriCorps positions are not displacing staff positions at partner agencies, AmeriCorps slots are awarded to partner agencies after the positions descriptions have been thoroughly reviewed and approved by the Program Director. By "member positions built into agency operations" ACCESS referred to AmeriCorps member positions that are routinely built into grants that partner agencies apply for and receive. This is an effective way that partner agencies ensure that they have the adequate cash match to support members and a more sustainable way to continue to fund members. ACCESS does not expect members to run grants, as this is strictly a staff role, but rely on AmeriCorps members to enhance activities that align with AmeriCorps performance measures. This is not displacement because there was never a staff member in that position and members are not encroaching on staff roles and responsibilities. Partner agencies would continue to deliver services in the absence of AmeriCorps positions. However, the number of services and clients served would be lessened greatly and potentially the quality of services may be affected.

8. At this time, ACCESS is not able to reduce the MSY any further. The current AmeriCorps budget submitted in this proposal does not cover the programmatic costs needed to execute the ACCESS Project. In effort to continue to operate the program with its current level of high quality, the ACCESS Project is actively seeking other funding streams. ACCESS highly values the service that AmeriCorps members provide to the community as well as professional development and leadership
Narratives

training offered to members. Though not the most financially viable option for the CNNC, ACCESS continues to seek AmeriCorps funding to support its mission of helping immigrant and refugee communities gain better access to human services, become economically self-sufficient and build bridges of understanding between immigrant and mainstream communities; as well as allowing immigrants and refugees the opportunity to engage in national community service.

C. Budget clarification items:
Changes made in the Budget Narrative.

Grant Compliance
1. The CCR Registration will be completed before the expiration date.
2. There were no findings on the A-133. A copy of the most recent A-133 was sent electronically to the North Carolina Commission per the Commission’s request.

D. Performance Measure clarification items:
2. Disaster: No changes made in the PM screens.
ACCESS would like to keep the Disaster Preparedness Education performance measure. Though not a daily activity, the outreach and education provided by members to immigrant and refugee communities does provide a significant resource to populations that would not otherwise be served (or receive culturally competent services). If the PM was deleted and as a result the 2.6 MSY, the activity would not be able to occur because the existing members wouldn't have time to dedicate to this PM. Many members of these populations are unfamiliar with disaster preparedness procedures, as they may never have experienced some of the emergency situations such as a tornadoes and hurricanes which are fairly common to NC and the US. No adjustment to the MSY and member allocations has been made.

3. Capacity Building: No changes made in the PM screens.
ACCESS would like to keep the Capacity Building performance measure. Agencies heavily rely on capacity building efforts to sustain the level of services and that AmeriCorps members are essential part of enhancing of those efforts. The outcome for this performance measure is for members to
Narratives

develop effective management practices and embed these practices into the organizations they serve in order to have a more long lasting impact. No adjustment to the MSY and member allocations has been made. If the PM was deleted and as a result the MSYs that are proposed to be dedicated to capacity building, the activity would not be able to occur because the existing members wouldn't have time to dedicate to this PM.

E. Evaluation clarification items: No action required.

F. ACCESS will not be requesting additional "no-cost" MSYs at this time.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics