

Narratives

Executive Summary

The [California JusticeCorps program] proposes to have [312] AmeriCorps members who will [assist people coming to court without an attorney and are trying to resolve crucial legal matters affecting their family, housing, personal safety, and financial stability. JusticeCorps members will educate litigants on their legal options and potential outcomes, provide information and referral, and assist litigants to accurately complete legal forms] in [court-based self-help centers in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego]. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [assisting 100,000 self-represented litigants to be prepared to move forward in their cases]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [130 volunteers], who will be engaged in [supporting court-based volunteer programs that increase access to justice.]

The CNCS investment of \$[1,083,740] will be matched with \$[1,232,429] in public funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. Problem/Need

Access to justice is now and has been a matter of national concern for many decades. In 1974, President Richard Nixon signed the law that established the Legal Services Corporation to ensure that low income Americans would have access to legal services. Arguing on behalf of the new law, Senator Walter Mondale explained, "The nation's poor have often been denied many adequate opportunities to assert their legal rights before the court and under the laws of the land." Forty-one years later our communities still struggle to bridge this justice gap-- a gap that exists between those who can afford representation and those who cannot. While anyone charged with a criminal offense is guaranteed an attorney (*Gideon vs. Wainright*), no such right exists for people facing civil legal issues--including those which may dramatically impact family structure, housing security, financial stability, protection from civil harassment, and domestic violence. The courts are designed to be navigated by attorneys. Self-represented litigants (SRLs) coming to court find themselves at a tremendous disadvantage compared to litigants who can afford an attorney or are provided legal aid representation. When they encounter the judicial system they will not know what forms they need to file, how to properly complete the forms, the process of serving other parties, how to file completed paperwork with the court, or how to adequately present their case to the judge--if they do need to appear in a courtroom.

At the local level, California has pioneered innovative solutions to tackle this growing area of need. For

Narratives

the past 15 years, California counties have established their own legal self-help centers and in 2008 the state institutionalized its support for this resource. Effective January 1 of that year, the Judicial Council--the policy making body for the Judicial Branch--adopted California Rule of Court 10.960, which provides that court-based self-help centers are a core function of the California courts. The rule mandated that every county in California provide self-help services.

Self-help centers are open to all members of the public --a place where anyone can come to receive legal information--not legal advice--on how to successfully navigate the court on their own. In 2004, the JusticeCorps program was created as a national service solution to increase access to justice--especially at mandated court-based self-help centers. This intervention uses a unique design developed specifically by the Los Angeles Superior Court working in partnership with the Judicial Council (then the Administrative Office of the Courts), nonprofit legal aid providers, and university partners.

The demand for assistance at the centers is great. According to quarterly reports to the Judicial Council of California, in fiscal year 2013-2014 over 1.2 million people were served in California's court-based self-help centers. Approximately 77% of those reported household incomes under \$2,000 a month and over half reported household incomes under \$1,000. JusticeCorps fills a specific need by providing highly trained AmeriCorps members who take the time to listen to SRLs, help them identify their options within the legal process and make educated decisions about how they want to proceed. JusticeCorps members guide them through the process to ensure they get their day in court.

Ensuring safe housing, reducing poverty, and providing safe communities for children are all National Service priorities. JusticeCorps' focus on successful outcomes through legal assistance is an important part of making these goals a reality. Increasing the stability of families and communities are the reasons self-help centers exist. JusticeCorps was created to supplement the services in place by providing more personalized and in depth service to the public than the center's staff can provide on their own empowering litigants to take charge of their own cases and move on to the next stage of their lives. The most typical cases that are presented to JusticeCorps members are family law cases (59%) (most typically domestic violence requests for restraining orders and dissolution of marriage (divorce) including child custody and support), small claims disputes (27%), and unlawful detainer--threat of eviction (3%).

Narratives

The volume of litigants in need is overwhelming, especially in the urban areas served by JusticeCorps. Almost half of the statewide filings in the case types that JusticeCorps members assist with occur in the target counties. (Judicial Council of California, 2014 Court Statistics Report (Fiscal Year 2012-13)) Program-wide our members serve in a total of 27 court-based centers, including sites in the California communities with the lowest Human Development Index scores. Self-help center intake data at the courts in these counties shows that at least 55% of self-help center users are living at or below the poverty level, and at least 25% primarily speak a language other than English. Collectively, the 7 counties participating in this California JusticeCorps proposal represent half the entire state population. These JusticeCorps partners--Los Angeles, San Diego, Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara--encompass the state's largest, most densely populated urban areas with the most diverse, underserved populations. Our partnership is strengthened by our nonprofit community partners, including Los Angeles' Neighborhood Legal Services, Bay Area Legal Aid, and San Diego Volunteer Lawyers; and our partner universities.

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model

The overall aim of the JusticeCorps program is to enhance the ability of individuals facing family, housing, financial, and personal safety crises to navigate the legal system. This is vital to achieving economic self-sufficiency and community stability. JusticeCorps' theory of change takes a systems-level approach, providing inputs and achieving outcomes at the recipient (SRLs), provider (JusticeCorps members), and organizational (participating courts) levels. In this model, members are trained to assist litigants, litigants move through the system more confidently and with better knowledge, and the courts are able to work more efficiently and deliver appropriate service for an entire community at a disadvantage.

Inputs: JusticeCorps invests in 312 members (274, 300-hour M/T and 38, 1,700-hour F/T Fellows), 27 site supervisors, 9 regional professional program staff, and 16 university representatives to connect the campus, the courts, and the program administration and achieve successful short-term and long-term outcomes.

JusticeCorps members serve under the supervision of qualified court staff, providing assistance for litigants. Typically, Minimum Time (or "student") members--enrolled undergraduate students recruited from JusticeCorps partner universities--serve 8 hours per week, either in one full-day or two

Narratives

half-day shifts. Full-Time Fellows serve 5 days a week, providing litigant assistance during self-help center business hours and acting as team leads for the cohort of student members assigned to their site.

Fellows begin service in late August and Student members in early September. Fellows serve a full 12-month period while Student members serve at least through their academic year (approximately 40 weeks), although many members will continue into the summer, often completing far more than their required 300 hours of service. The smaller cohort of Fellows is typically JusticeCorps alumni who return to serve as expert members and team leaders for the rest of our corps. These members are able to serve more intensively, leading workshops to walk litigants through the steps of specific case types, taking on more complex cases, answering procedural questions for other members, and developing new workshops for litigants.

Core Activities: JusticeCorps members in 27 court-based self-help centers in 3 regions provide:

- 1) Triage: Conducting the initial assessment of litigants' needs and directing them to another JusticeCorps member (who can provide personalized service), or center staff who can assist them, or making a referral.
- 2) Case Management: Assessing litigants' case status, educating them about next steps--such as filing for a fee waiver, requesting a hearing or submitting a proposed judgment.
- 3) Referrals: Providing litigants with information to educate them on their options and making referrals to appropriate services inside or outside the courts.
- 4) Forms Assistance: Assistance identifying and completing legal forms and procedures, one-on-one or in workshops.
- 5) Court Follow-up: Observing in the courtroom and providing litigants with information about the meaning of court orders and next steps after courtroom sessions.
- 6) Language Assistance: Providing assistance to litigants in their native language.

In many cases, members provide some or all of the types of assistance described above to the same litigant during one visit or provide assistance over the course of multiple visits. A litigant may simply need a brief referral to move on in his or her case. More often, a JusticeCorps member will sit and work with a litigant one-on-one for two hours or more, assisting with the completion of forms to ensure safety in a domestic violence situation, translating for a litigant who is trying to settle a dispute with his or her landlord, or working on custody paperwork for a parent with low literacy skills. This

Narratives

assistance can have a profound impact on the families and individuals who have come to the court in a time of crisis seeking personal safety and stability. When people emerge from crisis with the help of JusticeCorps members, the collective impact of these instances of assistance reverberates throughout the larger community.

JusticeCorps is managed by 1 FTE staff at the Intermediary level, with support from a grants accountant, and 3 teams of core program staff in each of our regions, varying in size depending on the number of members and sites they manage. Local program staff are headquartered at the main courthouse sites for Los Angeles, Alameda, and San Diego respectively.

Outputs: Members' target outputs within one program year are 100,000 instances of assistance to self-represented litigants, and 110,000 accurately completed forms. Because of the sheer volume, instances of assistance--not SRLS--are counted. The average dosage is 1 session of 15 minutes in length. However, members provide direct service to litigants in interactions that may range anywhere from 10 minutes to 2 hours to an entire morning, based on litigants' needs and the complexity of their legal issues.

Outcomes: In the short term, SRLs are better prepared to move forward with their family, civil, or small claims cases. Our program intervention gives them the tools they need to navigate an unfamiliar and process-bound system. Long-term, this intervention will help litigants move to a place of stability--securing housing, finalizing custody or guardianship agreements, or settling domestic violence or financial issues that affect their employment, healthcare, or educational prospects.

Given the relatively brief time SRLs are served, it is impossible to conduct a traditional pre-survey prior to service followed by a post-service survey. Instead we will utilize a retrospective pre-post survey design that will ask SRLs to self-report their change in level of understanding, confidence and preparation following the service compared to their pre-service level. While the retrospective pre-/post-survey methodology might result in SRLs having the desire to show a learning effect it has also been shown by researchers to be more effective at overcoming other potential biases such as response-shift.

3. Evidence Base

Narratives

The California JusticeCorps Program has undergone several external evaluations that have provided preliminary evidence of program effectiveness and support for the program model. Philliber Research & Evaluation, an independent evaluation firm, has conducted a series of implementation evaluations with the JusticeCorps program which have led to program improvements and refinement of the model over the past six years.

Program Implementation - The first evaluation, conducted in 2009, was focused on identifying the core elements of the program model and documenting the variations in implementation across the 22 program sites in three regions. (Philliber Research & Evaluation, "Evaluation of the 2009 California JusticeCorps Program", September 2009) While all 22 sites participated in data collection, 6 sites were selected as study sites where additional data was gathered and which received observations by evaluation staff. Several methodologies were used to gather data during this study including quantitative surveys completed by JC members and self-represented litigants, structured qualitative site observations, structured qualitative key informant interviews, structured qualitative focus group, and analysis of existing quantitative service data.

Structured qualitative site observations revealed that there were a variety of approaches for utilizing the services of JusticeCorps members within the legal self-help center context including variations in: [1] the type and range of tasks handled by members; [2] the level of assistance provided by members to self-represented litigants; [3] the type of interaction between Site Supervisors and members; and [4] the different methods of program management.

Structured interviews conducted with program administrators and court staff stakeholders identified and examined the program elements and strategies that were critical to program success, including: (1) recruitment and selection, (2) training and supervision, (3) retention, (4) working well with university partners, (5) partnering with non-profit agencies; (6) site expansion; and (7) developing roles for full time members. The interviews and site observations also uncovered a number of program challenges that might impede program success. The 2009 implementation evaluation resulted in the recommendations for program improvement including: [1] continue to strengthen and emphasize on-site training; [2] enhance and support the critical role of Site Supervisors; [3] use full-time JusticeCorps members in key roles; [4] fine tune the role of university representatives; [5] look for opportunities to expand JusticeCorps members' roles; and [6] Fully integrate JusticeCorps members

Narratives

into the work of the self-help centers.

A follow-up implementation evaluation, conducted by Philliber in 2012, sought to determine the extent to which program improvement recommendations were implemented across program sites to further refine the JusticeCorps Program model (Philliber Research & Evaluation, "Evaluation of the 2012 California JusticeCorps Program", November 2012). This follow-up evaluation gathered quantitative survey data from Site Supervisors and qualitative interview data with program administrators across all three regions to learn about improvements that were made to the programs as a result of the 2009 evaluation. This independent review established that many of the best practices identified in the 2009 evaluation had been adopted and/or adapted program-wide by 2012. While each site still had the flexibility to design and implement its own site-level training, there was standardization across the regions in the orientation training program and shared practices for supervision and reflection. For instance, all sites had incorporated the best practice of doing a case review at the end of shifts to make sure members can clarify legal issues that came up and that they have the chance to debrief and discuss. Additionally, since 2009, many of the program sites took steps to enhance and support the critical role of Site Supervisors, as well as to expand the use of full-time members in oversight roles. The program administrators had effectively used the previous evaluation recommendations and had taken steps to share best practices and training materials so that the JusticeCorps Program would continually refine and improve. The result was that members could be expected to have a common, positive experience serving at any program site.

Program Outcomes -- The independently conducted evaluations by Philliber have also gathered preliminary evidence of program outcomes. Positive outcomes have been documented for the self-represented litigants as well as the members.

Preliminary Outcomes for Self-Represented Litigants -- In 2009, the JusticeCorps Program conducted a snapshot study to gather feedback from and assess the outcomes for self-represented litigants served by the program (Research & Evaluation, "California JusticeCorps Customer/Litigate Feedback Survey Results for All Sites", July 2009). The confidential survey was distributed to all litigants assisted by members during a two-week period at the six study sites. In total, 377 surveys were returned. The self-represented litigants surveyed were very complimentary about the assistance that they received, with 90% reporting that the overall assistance they received was "excellent." Most offered no suggestions

Narratives

about how services could be improved as they were totally satisfied with the assistance that they had received. Ninety-seven percent responded that they were better prepared to proceed with their case.

Preliminary Outcomes for JusticeCorps Members -- The Philliber evaluations also documented positive outcomes for the members -- including their educational and career goals and their intent to remain engaged in a lifetime of service. Both the 2009 and 2012 implementation evaluations gathered survey data from members. Philliber Research & Evaluation, op. cit., September 2009 and November 2012. Sample sizes included 163 completed surveys in 2009 and 169 surveys in 2012. The results across these two years were very consistent. A pre to post analysis of civic knowledge and civic engagement skills resulted in significant improvements on all issues queried in both study years (the differences were statistically significant at the $p < 0.0001$ level). For both years, the largest gains were a better understanding of the legal rights and responsibilities of self-represented litigants, and better knowledge of the government services and agencies that impact this population.

Regarding member development, about three-quarters of the members reported that participating in the JusticeCorps program influenced their educational plans (75% in 2009 and 72% in 2012). Members in both years said that this experience broadened their knowledge of career opportunities within the legal field and introduced them to various concentrations of law. The 2009 survey documented that virtually all of the members (93%) intended to participate in volunteer activities in the future.

Taken together the two implementation evaluations of the California JusticeCorps program provide sufficient preliminary evidence to support the conclusions that the JusticeCorps program model is likely to result in the outcomes identified in the theory of change.

4. Notice Priority

N/A

5. Member Training

Members' training and service, in the short-term, leads to increased understanding of the legal process as well increased appreciation of the challenges faced by SRLs. This meaningful service in the long term results in more members entering public service careers and/or a lifetime of volunteer service.

Narratives

All JusticeCorps members participate in 16 hours of orientation before beginning service. Day 1 includes: AmeriCorps regulations and prohibited activities; JusticeCorps performance measures and data collection; and team-building. Day 2 includes: the judiciary and the role of the courts and self-help centers; legal advice (advocacy) versus legal information (neutrality); and common areas of law and standard forms for cases commonly seen in self-help centers. JusticeCorps Fellows begin their terms a few weeks prior to student members and receive intensive additional training to prepare them for their increased service commitment.

After orientation, members begin initial onsite training. They "shadow" at their assigned site during their first few shifts, and spend the first 3-5 consecutive Fridays of their term immersed in the areas of law that they will assist with most often. For example, family law sites will train members on the steps, forms, and procedures required for dissolution (divorce); members working in small claims will learn exactly how to walk a litigant through the small claims court process; and sites where members assist litigants seeking or responding to domestic violence restraining orders will train their corps in this legal content area. The concept of "information, not advice" is reinforced through every training opportunity and consistently during the members' service year. Active listening skills, self-care and compassion fatigue avoidance are "softer" skills that are also stressed--in addition to providing crucial information and assistance, we never forget that we ask members to support people in crisis and it is essential that members' well-being is addressed also.

Separate from the ongoing site-based training that members receive throughout the year, each region provides at least 3 weekend trainings for its entire cohort. These are planned and facilitated by JusticeCorps program staff, with sessions led by Judicial Council, court, legal aid and partner staff, and experts in relevant fields. Training topics include: the importance of accuracy and honesty in forms and declarations completion; basic legal ethics; assisting court users with Limited English Proficiency; communicating effectively with court users in crisis; and other topics. The final training each year covers "Life After AmeriCorps." For the past 3 years our training program has also included a full-day presentation to improve how bilingual members can assist litigants with limited English proficiency. Annually, our corps is fluent in 24 or more languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Farsi, Russian, Korean, and Tagalog.

Narratives

6. Member Supervision

Supervising staff are always present and actively involved in the work members are doing during their shifts. JusticeCorps site supervisors are licensed self-help center attorneys or other designated qualified staff, many of whom have worked for the courts or their legal aid organizations for years - and the majority of whom have been with the JusticeCorps program since it began. Members check in with supervising site staff at the beginning of every shift and routinely consult them 5-10 times while providing each instance of assistance, particularly if a case is complex or nuanced. Supervising staff reviews every instance of assistance before litigants leave the self--help center and then meets with all corps members present for a debrief and final review of their day's work.

JusticeCorps program staff provides new site supervisors with orientation that includes detail on AmeriCorps regulations and provisions--including prohibited activities; member code of conduct; expectations regarding data collection and member management; and a review of the JusticeCorps Site Supervisors handbook, a resource designed to support site supervisors throughout their tenure as monitors and mentors of JusticeCorps members. Veteran site supervisors receive refresher presentations and overviews of updates on AmeriCorps regulations and policies annually at summer partnership meetings each region convenes with its collective.

7. Member Experience

The JusticeCorps service experience has a profound impact on our members. The majority of our members are recruited from California's public universities--whose diverse population mirrors the communities in which JusticeCorps members serve. JusticeCorps combines a unique opportunity to provide service to their communities, receive professional mentoring and real-life exposure to a complex line of work, and the chance to build a strong bond with like-minded students. We provide full-time college students with--for the vast majority of them-- their very first step on a career path. Many of our members are planning careers in law, public service, or public administration. The training they receive in legal content, customer service, cultural competency and professionalism primes them for their next step. Each year, several of our members are selected for the highly competitive California Capitol Fellowships. Members who have gone on to law school say their real-life experience working with litigants prepared them better than any corporate internship could.

Members receive recognition throughout the year including at the annual graduation ceremony,

Narratives

where members who have provided outstanding service are invited to speak.

In addition to at least 2, all-corps national days of service per region--where members often serve with other National Service participants--all JusticeCorps members attend 4--5 reflection sessions to discuss their personal service experiences and the issues raised by their exposure to the challenges of others. These sessions are facilitated by JusticeCorps Fellows or University Reps who are trained in techniques for effective facilitation of "Civic Reflection." They are designed to complement JusticeCorps' efforts to develop an ethic of/skills for active and productive citizenship beyond the service term.

8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

JusticeCorps' partnership with AmeriCorps is fundamental to our program design and mission. It is reinforced at monthly reflection sessions, training, national service days and recognition ceremonies. The AmeriCorps logo is prominently featured on all JusticeCorps member gear, including uniforms worn daily and service day t-shirts. Members are required to wear their blue shirt imprinted with the AmeriCorps logo every time they serve--they will be sent home if they come to the site without their uniform. All printed and electronic public communications display the AmeriCorps logo and reference our AmeriCorps partnership.

Organizational Capability

1. Organizational Background and Staffing

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California court system and the legal applicant for this AmeriCorps grant. Under the leadership of Chief Justice Tani Cantil--Sakauye and Administrative Director Martin Hoshino, Judicial Council staff are responsible for a variety of programs and services to improve access to a fair and impartial judicial system. Based in San Francisco, the Judicial Council has a staff of more than 700 serving the courts in all 58 counties.

The JusticeCorps program's goals and objectives further the Judicial Council's objective of expanding access to justice, assuring no one is turned away from our court system for reasons owing to limited financial resources, language skills or any other factor limiting access.

After 11 years managing AmeriCorps funds to support the JusticeCorps program, the Judicial Council is fluent in AmeriCorps fiscal and programmatic regulations. The agency also administers other

Narratives

Federal funding sources, none of which has ever been in default, and has appropriate controls and processes in place to comply with regulations governing all Federal funds it receives. In addition to those controls, statewide JusticeCorps program and fiscal staff--Judicial Council employees--create and manage processes and policies specifically for JusticeCorps. This includes staying current on OMB circulars; monitoring criminal background check processes at partner courts; ensuring that grant and match funds are properly allocated and allowable; and managing and distributing policy memos and materials, such as the JusticeCorps Program/Policy Manual. Judicial Council staff also convenes annual meetings of all statewide program and partner staff. At those meetings, our partnership reviews successes and opportunities for improvements from the prior year, reviews performance measures and member activities to retain successful elements and make necessary changes to fine-tune the intervention, and discusses potential for new or improved aspects of our program model.

The current statewide director has been in her position for 8 years and oversees operations, compliance, and grant administration. She provides internal fiscal and programmatic trainings, conducts bi-weekly statewide conference calls, attends annual partnership meetings and makes regular site visits, as well as oversees the external research consultants who provide ongoing evaluation of the program.

JusticeCorps' full-time, grant-funded Program Directors are the key professional staff in each of the 3 regions and they manage that region's team of Program Coordinators and Assistants. Under the leadership of the Program Directors, each of whom has been with the program for the duration of its existence in that region, regional staff recruits, places and manages JusticeCorps members; they monitor site activities and data collection; and coordinate and communicating with their placement sites. Program Directors are key in liaising with court leadership--whose support and comprehension of the program is essential to its success at court sites--and manage the relationships with our partner universities and community-based organizations.

Each region also employs a group of "University Representatives," JusticeCorps alumni still enrolled at a partner university, who are engaged to assist in the recruitment, coordination and support of members. These university reps (7 in Los Angeles, 6 in the Bay Area, and 3 in San Diego) are cost-effective, part-time student workers who perform recruitment outreach at their campuses, participate in the member selection process, provide peer support for enrolled members throughout their service

Narratives

term, and support program staff by helping to make sure member hours are on track and schedules are being adhered to. The university rep positions offer Alumni of the program a chance to further develop their professional and leadership skills, and they also strengthen the program's relationships with our partner universities by representing a rewarding student job position. In addition, each placement site has a primary supervisor and additional supervisory staff supported by matching funds.

JusticeCorps has earned significant recognition including: acknowledgement from America's Service Commissions as one of the 52 Most Innovative AmeriCorps Programs in the U.S.; recognition by the California State Bar Commission on Access and Fairness as a Model Diversity Pipeline Program; and the California Chief Justice's Award for Excellence in Leadership. With guidance from the California partnership, the first replication of JusticeCorps' program model began four years ago in Illinois. Arizona has planned and applied for state AmeriCorps funding for a program based on JusticeCorps and several other states and territories including Massachusetts, New York, Georgia and Guam have explored its potential.

2. Compliance and Accountability

In implementing and managing the JusticeCorps program, the Judicial Council JusticeCorps staff commits to detecting and preventing compliance issues. As the legal applicant, the Judicial Council will ensure that regional staff, members, supervisors, and site operations are in compliance with all AmeriCorps regulations, and will hold itself accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are detected.

The organization will comply with AmeriCorps regulations, especially regarding prohibited and unallowable activities. All members are trained during orientation on prohibited activities, and throughout the year program staff monitor sites to ensure these requirements are being met. Our program has a clean record of fiscal and programmatic compliance and has never been placed in corrective action. We also commit that JusticeCorps members will not duplicate, displace, or supplant volunteers, staff and/or interns, but rather complement them.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. Cost Effectiveness

With a requested corporation share of \$1,083,740 for 96 MSYs, this application's proposed cost per MSY is \$11,288. From a national service perspective, our program is cost effective because we

Narratives

mobilize 312 members with a cost per MSY that is 6% lower than the allowable limit. Additionally, we can calculate the value of members' service at approximately \$13 per interaction--with 100,000 interactions each year, that makes a huge difference for JusticeCorps courts. The program's matching share increases to 52.09% and--with the exception of the statewide staff director position and evaluation match--all cash match is contributed by court and community partners. Other additional matching funds not quantified in the budget include the supervisory time provided by either the court or their non-profit legal aid organization partner and the university service learning or community based learning director's time for overseeing general member recruitment and the employment of the university reps.

2. Budget Adequacy

Our budget properly reflects appropriate funding to operate the model that has made our program successful. We invest in staff and in member costs and mobilize a large corps of members cost effectively. While intermediary staff works to maximize economies and share valuable program tools and resources among regions, the majority of day-to-day member management is done by teams of staff at the local level. Across the 3 regions, over 1,000 applications are received and processed each year. Annually, staff schedules and facilitates 12 all-member trainings and monitors 27 placement sites that span a distance of over 500 miles. We facilitate relationships with university and nonprofit partners. Combined, these practices have made JusticeCorps a high quality program that has produced more than 2,000 proud, loyal AmeriCorps alums.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

JUSTICECORPS EVALUATION PLAN

Theory of Change

The JusticeCorps theory of change posits that by training and supervising MT and FT members, they will provide SRLs with personalized service including triage, case management, referrals, forms assistance, court follow-up, and language assistance. Annually JC members will provide assistance to 100,000 SRLs (duplicated). In the short-term, this personalized attention will result in SRLs who receive 15 minutes or more of service having a better understanding of the legal process, feeling more confident representing themselves, feeling better prepared to proceed with their case, and being clearer about the next step they need to take to resolve their legal issues. In the medium term, SRLs served by JC will submit legal forms that are filled out accurately and completely, which will then result in court processes being more efficient and effective. In the long term, more court cases of SRLs will be

Narratives

concluded with judgments in a timely manner, which will result in improved life circumstances (e.g., a SRL facing eviction would likely achieve housing stability or a spouse experiencing abuse would receive the necessary legal protection with a restraining order.)

Measurable Outcomes

In the short-term, 85% of SRLs who receive 15 minutes or more of service will have a better understanding of the legal process, feel more confident representing themselves, feel better prepared to proceed with and resolve their case, and be clearer about the next step they need to take to resolve their legal issues. This will lead to the medium-term outcome that 90% of the SRLs served by JC who file, will submit legal paperwork that is accurately completed.

Research Questions

The research questions directly connect to the program's intended outcomes:

1. After being assisted by a JC member for at least 15 minutes, to what extent do SRLs have a better understanding of the legal process; feel more confident representing themselves; feel better prepared to proceed with their case, and feel clearer about the next step to take to resolve their legal issue?
2. Is the legal paperwork submitted for filing by SRLs who were assisted by a JC member more accurately completed than paperwork submitted by SRLs that were not served by a JC member?

Research Design

Two main strategies will be utilized to address the research questions:

Strategy 1- Substantial Service Tracking and SRL Survey: The strategy for answering the first question will be to implement daily data collection of substantial services (15 minutes or more) on the Instance of Service Form, which is being piloting tested during the 2015-16 program year.

Rationale: This strategy builds on past evaluation efforts. In 2009, JusticeCorps conducted a brief snapshot study with customers of the program. While useful, it was limited in its scope and thus not necessarily representative of the typical experience of SRLs served by the program. This proposed study has the advantage of gathering satisfaction and outcome data on every SRL served for 15 minutes or more. There are limitations to this approach. Given the relatively brief time SRLs are served, it is impossible to conduct a traditional pre-survey prior to service followed by a post-service survey. Instead we will utilize a retrospective pre-post survey design that will ask SRLs to self-report their change in level of understanding, confidence and preparation following the service compared to their pre-service level. While the retrospective pre post survey methodology might result in SRLs having the desire to show a learning effect it has also been shown by researchers to be more effective at overcoming other potential biases such as response-shift.

Narratives

Sampling: For each instance of assistance lasting 15 minutes or more, the JC members will fill out one form. Due to the sheer volume of SRLs served by the centers, each instance of assistance is counted separately and SRLs are subsequently duplicated. It is estimated that the program will gather 50,000 forms annually.

Measurement Tool: The Instance of Service Form is a multi-part form which includes the following elements including:

- (1) The nature of the services provided by JC members including time spent serving SRL; assistance in another language; type of service provided; type of case; and number of forms completed; and
- (2) An assessment from the SRL as to their satisfaction with and impact of the service.

Data collection procedures: JC members will complete the front side of the form immediately after a substantial interaction with a SRL. The member will then ask the SRL for his or her feedback on the back side of the form. A brief explanation will be provided to the SRL that explains the reason for and anonymous nature of the survey. The member will then give the SRL privacy to respond to the survey. Completed Instance of Service Forms will be returned to a central location at the site.

Data Entry and Analysis Plan: University representatives will gather the forms on a weekly basis for data entry into Excel. Alternately, JusticeCorps is exploring the possibility of developing an application so that surveys can be completed on a tablet and data immediately stored in a central database on the cloud. Entered data will be transmitted electronically to the evaluator on a monthly basis. Data will be analyzed and semi-annual reports will be produced that will describe the service experience and perceived impact.

Strategy 2: Quasi-Experimental Study of Court Filing: This study will address the second research question. Each of the program sites will participate in a month long snapshot study to determine if the legal paperwork submitted for filing by SRLs who were assisted by JC members is more accurately completed than paperwork submitted by SRLs that were not served by a JC member. The study will take place at the Court Clerks' offices or within the court room, whichever is the location when determination is made as to whether paperwork is completed accurately so as the SRLs can proceed with their cases.

Rationale: In the theory of change, the JC program results in court efficiencies and improved outcomes for SRLs assisted by JC members. To date, this theory is supported only by anecdotal evidence. Previous studies conducted for the JC program gathered qualitative data through interviews with court administrators to assess whether it was perceived that SRLs served by JC members were better prepared when filing their paperwork for hearings. The proposed study vastly improves on the

Narratives

previous studies by employing a quasi-experimental design to compare the actual time involved to process and the determination of accuracy of paperwork of SRLs assisted by JC members vs. SRLs who received no assistance. The limitation to this design is the cross-sectional or snapshot nature of the study, with each site and its associated court participating for just one month. This design allows us to describe the experience of SRLs utilizing court services during a one month period but limits the ability to make inferences about the whole population of SRLs served by the courts. Also, given that the design is quasi-experimental there might be selection bias in which SRLs seek out JC services and which do not. Thus, no causal inferences may be made as a result of this study.

Sampling: Annually, 9 sites will be selected to participate in a snapshot study of court filing. Regional Program Directors will assist the evaluation contractor in assessing readiness for participation. Typically every study month will have one site per region participating. Over the course of the funding period, every site where litigants are able to file immediately following receiving assistance will participate.

Measurement Tool: The evaluation contractor will design a Legal Paperwork Accuracy Log that will serve as the main tool for data collection. The main elements of this tool will include: type of SRL (served by JC or not), type of case, language assistance, time associated with paperwork review, and determination of paperwork accuracy.

Data collection procedures: During the study period, the supervising attorneys will mark the top form of the paperwork packet with a special stamp to indicate that the SRL was assisted by a JC member. At the Court Clerk's window or court room where determination is made about proper filing, data will be gathered each time any SRL submits papers for filing.

Data Entry and Analysis Plan: Logs will be sent weekly to the evaluation contractor for data entry into Excel. Data will be analyzed and an end of year report will be produced that analyzes the average time the court staff needs to spend reviewing packets and the accuracy rate of paperwork from SRLs served by the JC program compared to SRLs that received no assistance.

Qualification Needed for the Evaluator: The JC Program will seek the services of an external evaluation consultant who has expertise in measuring program processes and impact. The consultant should be familiar with how successful court -based legal services programs are implemented, especially those that integrate volunteer or student efforts into their program model. Additionally, knowledge of AmeriCorps program evaluation requirements will be beneficial to successfully completing the scope of work. The evaluation consultant should have expertise at conducting quasi-experimental and multi-site studies. Ideally, the JusticeCorps program will continue to work with

Narratives

PRA--which has been providing evaluation services for the program since 2009.

Estimated budget: The budget estimate for this two-strategy evaluation study includes \$60,000 annually for external evaluation contract and a 1-time \$20,000 cost for software development and hardware (tablets).

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

ROUND 2 CLARIFICATIONS

General Clarifications:

1. The application is under consideration for a grant to include 312 slots. No additional slots may be added. Please revise the budget, performance measures and Executive Summary so that it reflects the originally submitted request of 312 slots.

We have made the appropriate revisions to the budget, performance measures, and Executive Summary to reflect the originally submitted request of 312 slots.

Budget Clarifications:

1. Grant compliance clarification= CCR expires 8/02/16. An active CCR registration is required to receive a CNCS grant award. Please re-registration to prevent delays in processing award.

The Judicial Council supervisor who has responsibility for reregistering our CCR is currently in the process of doing so.

2. A-133 clarification=Invalid EIN on record. Unable to verify. Please update EIN and provide copy of most recent A-133. If not required to complete a Single Audit please explain.

We will submit documentation of the Judicial Council EIN #94-3105441 to americorpsclarifications@cns.gov. Regarding Single Audit requirements, The Judicial Council of California, is a State of California agency in the judicial branch of state government. The audited financial statements of all State of California departments and agencies are included in a single audit report. The report is filed under the State of California, Department of Finance (DOF), Office of State Audits and Evaluation (OSAE). The audit reports can be found on the DOF Web site at www.dof.ca.gov/fisa/osae/OSAE_Audit_Reports. Only those departments that have audit exceptions are listed separately in this report. The Judicial Council has no audit exceptions.

Narratives

B. Programmatic clarification items:

Please respond in the eGrants narrative field labeled 'Clarification Summary' unless otherwise indicated.

1. Funding is extremely competitive and limited this year. Having a low Cost Per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. Applicants submitting with a low cost per MSY will receive higher priority for funding. Please consider decreasing the application's proposed cost per MSY by revising the CNCS share of the program budget, or provide a compelling explanation for why the cost/MSY cannot be decreased. CNCS will review both the individual program cost per MSY and the aggregate cost per MSY after the clarification period and may elect to make further decreases in cost per MSY and/or may be only able to partially fund applicants.

RESPONSE: We have reduced our proposed Cost per MSY from 11,290.13 to 11,143.

2. The application does not clearly describe how the AmeriCorps service activities will represent unique and significant contributions. Please explain how member activities will provide unique and significant contributions to existing efforts to address the stated need.

RESPONSE: CA JusticeCorps members provide a unique and significant contribution to mandated self-help centers that are unequipped to assist the 1.2 million litigants they see each year as thoroughly as when JusticeCorps members are present. The program offers a complementary service to existing, mandated self-help centers in the State. JusticeCorps members help guide litigants through a very complex courts system, a service that would not otherwise be available to those litigants served by JusticeCorps members. Many self help centers can provide very little to no one-one assistance. Those centers may have the capacity to only distribute forms or make minimal referrals. Given the ever increasing volume of litigants representing themselves due to limited financial, language, and/or knowledge capacity, supplemental and complementary support is essential to ensure all litigants can access the complex and often bewildering justice system.

Members assist litigants to make sense of their legal situation, follow the proper steps, and move through the system more confidently and knowledgeably. They can listen at length--helping litigants

Narratives

tell their stories while training them on process and procedures to compose declarations, file and/or serve documents, and move forward with their cases.

Unique services provided by JusticeCorps members include: (1) Extended, one-on-one assistance to walk litigants through procedures and paperwork required for whatever step they are at in their case; (2) Knowledgeable, culturally competent language assistance for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) litigants who either speak a native language other than English or have limited literacy skills if English is their first language; (3) Deep knowledge of specific and limited areas of law. For example, some JusticeCorps members are trained to work primarily on domestic violence restraining orders. At their centers, they are able to sit with litigants for 90 minutes or more to ensure all paperwork is accurately completed and proper referrals are provided to litigants who are coming to the center in times of crisis; (4) Participating in a reliable, compassionate, and dedicated cohort they are easily recognizable (proudly wearing their AmeriCorps uniform--a branded Oxford blue shirt that sets them apart in the center) and standing ready to help litigants.

3. The narrative, logic model, and performance measures describe the intent of measuring 15- minute instances of assistance to service recipients. Please explain how this minimal amount of service intervention is a sufficient measure of program performance.

RESPONSE: The references to 15-minute increments in our narrative, logic model, and performance measures are meant to indicate that we propose measuring (capturing litigants' feedback) on service interactions of 15 minutes or more. While we note that the approximate or minimum time spent with litigants is 15 minutes, one-on-one assistance can last anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours. The amount of time members spend with litigants is dependent on a number of factors, such as the nature and complexity of the litigant's case, the stage of his or her case, whether this is an initial visit on a pending matter or a follow-up, and language access issues. While all information and assistance provided by members is valuable, we have concentrated our measurement on interactions of more than 15 minutes to better capture feedback from litigants who are served after triage, intake, or referrals.

C. Budget clarification items:

Please respond in the 'Budget Narrative' section of the application unless otherwise indicated.

Narratives

1. CCR expires 8/02/16. An active CCR registration is required to receive a CNCS grant award.

RESPONSE: Our agency is on track to renew its CCR registration before the expiration date of 8/02/16. Should CNCS award a grant to the Judicial Council, the CCR will be renewed and active.

2. Invalid EIN on record. Unable to verify.

RESPONSE: The EIN is correct. To confirm, the EIN Number for Judicial Council of California is 94-3105441. We have IRS documentation on file and can produce that if the EIN is still unverifiable.

D. PERFORMANCE MEASURE CLARIFICATION ITEMS:

Please make the following changes in the Performance Measures screens in eGrants unless otherwise indicated:

1. As written, OUTPT30407 will measure the number of individuals (self-represented litigants) who receive services and OUTCM30408 will measure the number of these same individuals who report increased preparedness. However, the Described Instrument sections of both the output and outcome state that "instances" of assistance will be measured (in 15-minute increments) and, per the Describe Interventions section, this would include duplication of individuals in a single visit and duplication of individuals who come to the center for more than one visit. In addition, it appears that this data would include interventions that may not have been provided by AmeriCorps members. Performance measurement reported to CNCS must not represent duplication and must directly relate to member service.

RESPONSE: Our data includes only interventions provided by AmeriCorps members. Regarding duplication, several members serve at one time, each in roles that are explicitly stated in our acceptable member activities. If two members are serving together, then one might be doing triage (assessing litigants' needs when they arrive at the center and then directing them where to go next) and one might be doing one-on-one forms assistance. Each member has provided a "distinct instance of assistance" to this litigant, so the work is not being duplicated. Regarding litigants who visit the center multiple times, each visit will trigger a new set of "instances of assistance." Confidentiality and

Narratives

case management practices prevent us from following litigants from beginning to resolution of their case.

a. Please review the Notice of Funding Opportunity and Performance Measure Instructions and revise the output to measure the number of unduplicated self-represented litigants who receive service from AmeriCorps members.

RESPONSE: Please see response to Query #1.

b. Revise the outcomes so that they measure a significant level of gain or improvement in knowledge, attitude, behavior or condition as a result of the member service/ intervention.

RESPONSE: Our outcome does measure a significant level of improvement in knowledge as a result of JusticeCorps members' intervention. Our program design and the nature of our service recipients do not allow for any baseline or pre-testing. Litigants come to the self-help center because they need guidance on navigating the legal system. In addition to assisting litigants to accurately complete forms, which is a step toward continuing their case if they choose to file those forms, members are there to increase litigants knowledge, confidence, and ability to move forward without a lawyer. We measure these experiential outcomes through the litigant feedback form. Again, because of varied subject matter and confidentiality, we are not able to specifically measure a level of knowledge or understanding specific to the details of a litigants' case pre- and post-intervention.

c. Specify the minimum number of days, hours, or other units of participation that will be required in order for an individual to be counted under this measure and indicate how the program intends to track this information.

RESPONSE: We serve litigants on an individual basis as they arrive according to the unique legal challenges they present, and therefore, provide individualized instances of assistance as a measure of improved condition. The nature of this type of service does not lend itself to a fixed level of dosage. The minimum amount of service that can result in an improved condition is 15 minutes.

Narratives

d. In addition, ensure that the output and outcomes have the same unit of measure. Currently, OUTCM30409 measures number of documents which is not aligned with the output.

RESPONSE: We have aligned this measure to ensure that the output and outcome have the same unit of measure.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics