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Executive Summary

The Service and Conservation Corps proposes to have 44 FT and 32 HT/serving for 6 months in a full-time capacity (60 MSYs), using 6 total crews, with typically 10 members each who will provide disaster relief, Gulf Coast restoration, and conservation of public lands in 4 states (AR, LA, OK, TX). At the end of the first program year, the AC members will be responsible for 675 acres of improved public land and 27 miles of improved trails/waterways. In addition, the AC members will leverage an additional 500 volunteers who will be engaged in assisting in disaster areas and environmental stewardship projects through National Trails Day and MLK Day.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$805,800 will be matched with \$1,013,172, \$903,172 in public funding and \$110,000 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. NEED - American YouthWorks (AYW) proposes a cross-disciplinary AmeriCorps (AC) program that addresses 3 areas: disaster response, coastal restoration, and public lands maintenance and engages diverse young people in service, developing job and leadership skills and transforming their lives. PUBLIC LAND MAINTENANCE (AR, OK, LA, TX): There is a growing, multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog and our parks' trails are eroding, roads and bridges are crumbling, and camping and public use areas are deteriorating toward unsafe conditions. Meanwhile, our public land and water managers do not have the capacity to address these needs, with the 21st CSC Full Report stating "Federal land management agencies report an aggregate of more than \$75 billion in backlogged maintenance projects. State and local agencies could add billions more to this total." (Sept. 2012). Although all four states face unique challenges and opportunities tied to specific pressures on natural resources, they each experience public agency funding cuts that impact their ability to address their maintenance and restoration needs. TX - In 2011, TX Parks and Wildlife Department experienced a \$20 million budget decrease that persists today. Since 2011, TX Forest Service has faced \$34 million in budget cuts. OK - Due to 2016 budget cuts, the OK Department of Agriculture and Forestry closed 4 offices. AR - In a recent 2018-2019 Amendment (Amendment 75, Appropriation 500), the summary states, there is a backlog of \$211 million in projects yet to be completed. (http://www.dfa.arkansas.gov/offices/budget/budgetRequests/0900_parks.pdf) LA - In 2016, the LA Department of Agriculture and Forestry faced a \$2.5 million budget cut. COASTAL RESTORATION (LA, TX): Coastal ecosystems and economies in communities along the

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Gulf of Mexico have struggled under the pressures of natural and human-made disasters. In addition to the impacts of flooding and hurricanes, Gulf Coast communities were severely impacted by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which released more than four million barrels of crude oil into the Gulf. Deepwater Horizon caused extensive damage to wildlife and marine habitats, as well as to fishing and tourism industries critical to the survival of local communities and the coastal economy, resulting in settlements of billions of dollars over the next 15 years to implement natural resources restoration projects. Our current AC State program is a member of the Gulf Coast Restoration Initiative (GCRI), which is a multi-year effort to develop the infrastructure to sustain existing and establish new conservation corps in the five Gulf States. In 2016, AYW established a Coastal Restoration program in Houston, TX, and is strategically placed to increase conservation and restoration in TX and LA coastal communities.

DISASTERS (AR, LA, OK, TX): Across the country, we have experienced increased and intensified disasters that affect more people directly and indirectly and cause a great financial impact, particularly on communities of poverty, due to increased urbanization in high-risk zones; concentrated physical structures and infrastructure; and increased populations. AR, LA, OK and TX have experienced an increase in disasters, including hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes, and wildfires. TX - Since 1953, TX received 342 disaster declarations, more than any other state. Since 2013, TX experienced 8 FEMA declared disasters and has one of the highest federal declaration thresholds (\$35 million for Public Assistance & 800 major/destroyed homes for Individual Assistance). OK, AR, LA: In the last 3 years, OK experienced 8 FEMA declared disasters and 12 major disaster events; AR weathered 8 FEMA declared disasters; and LA experienced 4 FEMA declared disasters, one of which was the 2016 flooding that resulted in the largest AC deployment to date and will require years to recover. Communities and emergency management officials can be overwhelmed by the magnitude of work and coordination that must occur to bring a community through response to recovery. FEMA and State Emergency Management Departments do not rebuild or clean the communities to which they are called; they bring other resources and funds to the table which means locals must work to bring back basic services and normalcy. And unaffiliated volunteers can quickly move from a community asset to a secondary disaster without the proper coordination. According to the Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network, "Spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers... often arrive on-site at a disaster ready to help. Yet because they are not associated with any part of the existing emergency management response system, their offers of help are often underutilized and even problematic to professional responders." (Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster). Another issue relates to volunteer hours, for which if assigned a specific dollar

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amount and recorded properly, can be leveraged after disaster to offset the local cost. Often, local leaders are busy with the overall disaster and do not have capacity to manage this tracking. When managed appropriately, volunteers have the ability to not only increase the people served in a disaster, but also to reduce the total response cost. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: Young workers face higher unemployment rates than other age groups, while unemployment for all ages is 5.5%, it is 7.8% for 18-34 year olds (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Young Adults also experience reduced wages: 10% compared to 4% for adults age 35+. At the same time, there are increased job openings in the forestry and conservation sciences fields due to an estimated 7 % sector growth over the next 10 years and employees reaching retirement age (Bureau of Labor Statistics). A federal advisory committee for the creation of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21st CSC) found that 60% of the National Park Service skilled workforce is eligible to retire in the next 5 years (21st CSC Full Report, Sept. 2012).

2. INTERVENTION - Through our past AC State programs, the Texas Conservation Corps' (TxCC) and our Disaster Response Teams (DRT), we implemented a unique cross-disciplinary resource to mitigate environmental challenges in the southeastern and southwestern U.S. This model of joining conservation with disaster response work is based on the long-standing successes of the US Forest Service, TX Parks and Wildlife Department, and other agencies. By following best practices of federal and state conservation professionals playing an active role in disaster response, we propose a holistic approach to produce resilient communities. Additionally, we spent the last 20 years establishing youth corps/opportunity models that recruit and engage young people in important service opportunities with a focus on professional development, life skills, future employment, and enhanced civic and community engagement. Based on the needs outlined in the previous section and our experience in cross-disciplinary programming, we propose three major interventions in AR, LA, OK, and TX.

INTERVENTION 1: PUBLIC LAND MAINTENANCE - Primary interventions include: a) trail construction/maintenance: designing, constructing and repairing multi-use trails to increase sustainability and improve recreational access; b) installation of erosion control features to direct surface water and run-off away from trail and harden trail tread; c) repair or maintenance of campground structures such as pavilions, fire rings, toilets, and picnic tables; d) Signage installation/maintenance: installing or repairing signage on trails, roads or interpretive displays; e) removal of enough burnable fuels in forested areas (often using chainsaws) so that when a wildfire burns it is less severe and can be more easily suppressed; f) manage invasive species utilizing mechanical means of removal and/or herbicide application; g) repair or restore structures with historic/cultural significance. INTERVENTION 2: COASTAL RESTORATION ACTIVITIES -

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focusing on stream, marsh, shoreline and oyster reef stabilization and restoration in support of biodiversity, recreation, flood management and landscape development. Primary interventions include: a) removing non-native plant species that negatively impact agriculture, forestry, and recreation; b) replanting native aquatic and emergent plants to reduce erosion and improve habitat, and; c) installing structures such as sand fencing to stabilize dunes. INTERVENTION 3: DISASTER RESPONSE - our crews trained for disaster response will coordinate with emergency management personnel to address critical needs such as: a) remove natural and human-made debris including downed trees (often utilizing chainsaws) or damaged building materials to re-open access to damaged communities or public land; b) muck and gut flood-damaged buildings, which involves precision demolition techniques designed to salvage as much of a home's infrastructure as possible after a major disaster so that the homeowner can quickly rebuild on the existing structure; c) use chainsaws to remove complex tree hazards that pose safety risk and mobility challenges to survivors and responders alike; d) establish and manage volunteer reception centers connecting volunteer labor with needs of survivors, executing damage assessments of homes and businesses and tracking all volunteer hours and resources to submit for FEMA reimbursement by the affected community..

3. THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL - Today's conservation corps build on 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) legacy, one of the most successful efforts to put people to work and restore our lands and waters. Our cross-disciplinary program model, with a focus on conservation, public land management, disaster response, and member development, is modeled after this legacy and rooted in several theories of change. CONSERVATION and PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT: Our public lands, including parks, forests, and coastlines, face 2 major immediate and critical needs: 1) multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog with \$9 billion in jobs waiting to be done in the National Parks alone; and 2) retirements within public lands agencies. The answer to these 2 needs lies in using service as an intentional strategy - creating a national Service Corps that delivers environmental and societal improvements and creates valuable outcomes for those who serve. SOLUTION: CORPS CAN PROVIDE NEEDED LAND AND COASTAL IMPROVEMENTS - In the last 10 years, Service and Conservation Corps delivered more than \$30 million worth of projects in the National Park System alone, with the Facility Management Division indicating that Conservation Corps crews saved 65% in project costs/\$50,000 on average when compared to contracted crews. Corps crews are self-contained teams that provide their own transportation, tools, gear, equipment, insurance, back-end support, and technical expertise. Corps also have the capacity and experience leading large volunteer projects, mobilizing and managing local volunteers and donations, and engaging affected communities.

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SOLUTION: CORPS ARE A PROVEN PROFESSIONAL PIPELINE - Service Corps are an important strategy to develop land and conservation management professionals. Between 2009 and 2014, half a million full-time, Federal employees retired. Service provides Corps members with a pre-apprenticeship program: training in resource stewardship, health and safety, teamwork and leadership, and communications. **DISASTER RESPONSE: Chaos Theory**, regularly linked to disaster response, looks at certain systems that are very sensitive where a small change may make the system behave completely differently. Our goal is to minimize the chaos that can occur as a result of disasters. Concepts that guide disaster management are the reduction of harm to life, property, and environment. However, the capacity to carry out a coordinated and well-managed response can vary greatly. Our members establish a robust volunteer management and coordinated data systems that allows local leaders to quickly take on recovery activities and start helping people, preventing mass migration and long-term suffering. **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT:** We take our members through 5 main stages: 1) identify and engage potential conservation leaders; 2) offer intense training, on-site development, and mentoring opportunities; 3) undertake intense environmental, conservation, and disaster response projects, with AYW and partner support, which continue the individual professional and personal development; 4) Engage with local communities, while serving, to change attitudes and behaviors of themselves and others; 5) Support continued work and/or involvement with the environment and/or disaster communities post service. These components impact members' developmental trajectories by increasing education, job skills, employment and wage rates, economic security, and personal and social responsibility. To support our theories of change, we propose a national AC program that places 44 FT and 32 HT/serving for 6 months in a full-time capacity (60 MSYs) in 4 states (AR, LA, OK, TX), using 6 total crews, with typically 10 members each, 2 of which are leaders. **PUBLIC LANDS MAINTENANCE: CREW 1** (10 FT) and **CREW 2** (2 FT and 16 HT/6 months at a FT capacity) placed in AR, LA, OK, TX; **CREW 3/Trails Across TX** (2 FT and 16 HT/6 months at a FT capacity), all 3 serving out of the Austin Operating Site. Approximately 70% of their program term will be focused on at-risk ecosystems. Members will deploy for two-week work periods on conservation projects and use strategies such as check dams, water bars, invasive plant removal, and other restoration techniques. Members will complete public land improvements such as constructing footbridges, campsites, fences, crowd control devices and other park improvements. The measures we will report on are: EN4 - 500 or more acres of public land will be treated; EN5 - 20 or more miles of trails/waterways will be treated; EN4.1 - At least 450 acres of public land will be improved; and EN5.1 - At least 18 miles of trails/waterways will be improved. **COASTAL**

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RESTORATION: CREW 4 (10 FT) serving out of Houston Operating Site; CREW 5 (10 FT) serving out of Louisiana Operating Site. Both will do primarily coastal restoration, but are also trained in disaster response and public land maintenance they may perform in AR, LA, OK, TX. Approximately 50% of their program term will focus on LA and TX coastal restoration activities that specifically reduce environmental degradation. They will deploy for two-week work periods and complete stream restoration, bank stabilization, salt marsh restoration, water quality monitoring, invasive species removal, fish repopulation, planting of sea grasses, dune stabilization, oyster reef restoration, and other activities associated with coastal and aquatic habitat restoration. The measures we will report on: EN4: 250 or more acres of public land will be treated; EN5: 10 or more miles of trails/waterways will be treated; EN4.1 - At least 225 acres of public land will be improved; and EN5.1 - at least 9 miles of trails/waterways will be built or improved. DISASTER RESPONSE: Crew 6 (10 FT) serving out of Austin Operating Site, providing disaster response support in AR, LA, OK, TX. Although it's not possible to estimate the occurrence of natural disasters, these disaster-trained crews will be available to deploy in AK, LA, OK, and TX as self-contained response units helping disaster victims or setting up and operating a volunteer management system to coordinate additional leveraged inputs represented by disaster volunteers. Interventions include debris clean-up and removal, mucking and gutting, hazard tree removal, operation of Volunteer Reception Centers, feeding and sheltering, operating call centers, dispatch and tracking of donated equipment, damage assessments, client intake and tracking, field leadership for volunteers, and inter-agency facilitation. The measures we will report on: D-2: 550 individuals affected by disaster, or volunteers participating in disaster relief efforts, will receive CNCS-supported services; Applicant Developed Outcome: Community will have an enhanced capacity to respond to and recover from disaster events - At least 90% of community stakeholders surveyed will attest to an enhanced community capacity to respond to and recover from disaster events.

4. EVIDENCE BASE - AYW proposes this National AC program on the foundation of PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE, supporting also the pre-preliminary tier. AYW employs a robust data collection system that uses varied evaluation methods to track project progress: activity logs, tracking database, partner surveys, receipt of services acknowledgements. First, our staff and members maintain a daily activity log and tracking database that include habitat restoration activities; mileage and acreage logs; location; crew hours; educational components; and other important specifications. Upon completion of each project, we conduct a partner survey that includes a description of the work performed, outcomes, comments, a work quality assessment, the crew's competence and effectiveness, and the partner's satisfaction level. Upon satisfactory completion, partners provide an

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acknowledgement of receipt of services. Additionally, AYW compiles aggregate participant demographic data to capture the economic need or other characteristics of young adults engaged in this project. Based on this thorough data collection system, our past performance has demonstrated a positive impact that our program likely has on the environment and people we serve. Following are the measures we tracked and reported on for the last 2 years: D2: number of individuals in served in disasters - 2014: target = 500, actual = 6000 and 2015: target = 750, actual = 1335; D2 Applicant Determined: homeowners report ability to stay within community as they progress through the recovery phase - 2014: target: 50%, actual = 0% and 2015: target: 50%, actual = 0% - For this measure, our program had challenges in collecting information from homeowners due to the sensitivity of disasters and we had only 1 disaster deployment and the measure was dropped afterwards; D2 Applicant Determined: partners report enhanced capacity to respond to disaster - 2014: target: 90%, actual = 100% and 2015: target: 90%, actual = 100%; D4: number of individuals residing in disaster-prone areas aided by disaster mitigation activities - 2014: target = 1000, actual = 1646 and 2015: target = 1000, actual = 1431; D4 Applicant Determined: partners report enhanced community capacity and resilience resulting from disaster mitigation activities - 2014: target = 90%, actual = 100% and 2015: target = 90%, actual = 100%; EN4: number of acres treated - 2014: target = 200 acres, actual = 397.5 acres and 2015: target = 200 acres, actual = 679 acres; EN4 Applicant Determined: partners report enhanced ecological health - 2014: target = 90%, actual = 100% and 2015: target = 90%, actual = 100%; EN5: miles of trails/waterways treated - 2014: target = 20 miles, actual = 60.5 miles and 2015: target = 20 miles, actual = 58.8 miles; EN5 Applicant Determined: partners report that trail improvements create more sustainable public lands - 2014: target = 90%, actual = 100% and 2015: target = 90%, actual = 100%. And over the last few years, AYW has engaged in 2 outcome studies that demonstrate positive impact in both member development and environmental stewardship activities. First, in 2012, AYW participated with 11 other conservation corps in a study evaluation commissioned by the Public Lands Service Coalition and developed by leaders from the involved corps organizations and Texas A&M University and Brigham Young University researchers. The purpose was to build upon previous corps-related evaluation efforts by assessing the impact of the corps experience in terms of targeted outcomes and intentions to pursue natural resource education, career paths, and outdoor recreation activities. Significant increases were observed across all outcome measures. In terms of community and conservation efforts, participants reported significantly increased community engagement, positive attitudes toward public lands, and environmental activism. Corps participation was also associated with significantly increased

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developmental outcomes, with participants reporting increases in their ability to work in teams, leadership skills, self-responsibility, grit, and communication skills. Commitment to pursue education and careers in natural resource management, as well as intentions to engage in outdoor recreation also increased. Second, AYW is currently participating in a three year evaluation with other conservation corps programs and researchers from North Carolina State University examining two primary long-term impacts associated with corps activities: 1) improved public parks and habitats promote ecosystem health; 2) improved trail conditions increase the quality of trails, leading to higher accessibility and usage, enhanced visitor experiences, and increased health outcomes. The study (completed March 2018) will use CNCS performance measures, EN4 and EN5.

5. NOTICE PRIORITY - The proposed AC program meets two CNCS priority funding areas: 1) Disaster Services; and 2) 21st Century Service Corps. Our AC teams will be ready to disperse to the 4 states to provide disaster response and improve community resiliency and capacity. Our corps are well trained and able to mobilize as self-contained units that can reside and camp anywhere. Since 2013, our organization has been a member of and accredited as a 21st Century Service Corps (listed on their website at <http://21csc.org/list-of-21csc-programs/>). We 1) Put Americans to Work, recruiting young people and training them in certifications and advanced skills; 2) Preserve, protect, and promote America's public and tribal lands and waters as well as natural, cultural, and historical resources (successfully done for 23 years); and 3) Build America's future as we educate our members and supporters on becoming active and engaged citizens and stewards of natural and cultural resources, communities and the nation.

6. MEMBER TRAINING - Our members will receive extensive orientation, training, mentorship, and hands-on skills development through our well developed and planned member support strategy that is based on 20 years of experience and member and staff feedback. Orientation training activities include 200 hours of classroom and field time for crew leaders and 92 hours for crew members. Crew Leaders (Nov. start) attend a 4 week training: conservation hard skills (50 HRS); first aid (22 HRS); risk management (17 HRS); emergency response (12 HRS); local ecology and naturalist (10 HRS); driver/ trailer (8 HRS); direct field conservation work (27 HRS); program and partner policy study (22 HRS); leadership skills (16 HRS); team building (8 HRS); and planning time (8 HRS). Mandatory protocols, such as Project Hazard Analysis and Incident Reporting, are the subject of multiple lessons and practice sessions to demonstrate their requirement and importance. Crew members (FT start in Jan. and HT start in Jan. and June, depending on when their 6 month term starts). Their training includes: hard conservation skills (58 HRS); herbicide use and safety (4 HRS); safety (14 HRS); local

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ecology and plant identification (6 HRS); team-building (5 HRS); and policy and procedure review (5 HRS). Throughout the year, crews receive additional training, with support from state and federal government agency training curricula: Crosscut Saw Use and Safety (USDA Forest Service), Skid Steer Loader Use and Safety (OSHA), Wetland Trail Construction (USDA Forest Service) and Repointing Mortar Joint in Historic Buildings (NPS). Additional specialized trainings may include: Environmental Hazards and General First Aid Treatment; Hand Tool Safety Use and Maintenance, Chainsaw Repair and Maintenance; Proper Bucking and Limbing; GPS Use for Project Documentation; Local Ecology, Soil, & Erosion; Trail Construction; Introduction to the Incident Command System; Wilderness First Aid; GIS Mapping and Analysis; Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior; Emergency Shelter Operations; Emergency Donations Management; Emergency Volunteer Management; OSHA Construction Training and Health; and ISA pre-arborist certification. The Disaster Response crews complete FEMA Emergency Management Institute National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) online courses. These include ICS 100/Intro to Incident Command System (ICS), 200/ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents, 700/NIMS, An Introduction and 800/National Response Framework, An Introduction. After completion of the online courses, members participate in additional specialized training including ICS 300/Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents, 400/Advanced ICS for Command and General Staff, G288/Donations Management, and G489/Volunteer Management plus a muck and gut simulation (demolition techniques for removing damaged floors and walls in a flooded building), and HAZMAT decontamination training, taught by certified TX Department of Emergency Management and AYW staff. In addition to the position specific training, members receive training on AC and National Service so members understand what it means to be an AC member and the tradition of AC with Conservation work. To ensure compliance with CNCS prohibited activities, AYW staff engage members in a thorough review of the member service agreement, including reading each prohibited activity; an opportunity for questions and exploration of potential examples; and a quiz which includes a question requiring them to list the prohibited activities.

7. MEMBER SUPERVISION - Program staff ensure AC members receive a high level of support and guidance during their term through frequent interaction and building esprit de corps. Our crew-based program model includes 1 major supervision layer with an additional support (not formal supervision) provided by Crew Leaders. Field Coordinators, with 1 for each of our 3 field offices, provide direct supervision and training to AC members. Field Coordinators possess extensive field experience and soft skills such as group facilitation and leadership development. Field Coordinators provide: 1) ongoing

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training and technical support and guidance on safety and team dynamics issues; 2) first line communication for each crew; 3) oversight to ensure crews have appropriate tools, camping supplies, food, and logistical support; and 4) biweekly corps project debriefs and regular performance reviews with each member. Second, each crew consists of 2 Leaders that serve as another level of team and member support. While not in a supervisory capacity, leaders serve as logistical and communication leads. These leaders are typically 2nd year corps members who act as role models and provide peer-to-peer guidance. Finally, the Program Director and Coordinator provide support as needed, particularly if issues arise such as harassment or discrimination. And while not a part of our program structure, staff from partner agencies serve as mentors. We create opportunities for intentional member interaction with partners. Frequently, partner staff share their experience and information about career paths, offer advice and coaching, and provide networking opportunities for members who wish to enter the field post-service.

8. MEMBER EXPERIENCE - Through exposure to professionals, training, and projects, our members accumulate diverse experiences that aid in finding meaningful life and career paths. Member development includes certifications; on the job training; understanding of agencies that do conservation, environment, and disaster work; project management and implementation experience; USA jobs training; and Life after AC training. Living and serving in group and outdoor settings can be stressful and intense, especially due to the physical demands of conservation and emotional nature of disaster work. To equip members with coping tools, we build a culture of communication, team work, and reflection. From the beginning, members use professionally modeled debriefs at the end of projects to examine successes, failures, and learning moments. During disaster deployments, we rely on a relationship with the TX Department of Mental Health to hold decompression sessions to process stress and transition back to normal life. Our recruitment plan has 3 focus areas: 1) targeted outreach to state and regional universities, in TX and LA for 2017/2018, and increasing to AR and OK in 2018/2019; 2) post positions to national web-based job boards (CoolWorks, Conservation Corps Jobs, Idealist, Backdoor Jobs, Craigslist, Society for Ecological Restoration, Monster and Indeed); 3) participation in selected university career fairs (TX, LA, AR, OK), particularly to natural sciences and agricultural majors, and universities that provide more opportunities for outreach to diverse youth. In TX, AYW is a part of a group of AC programs called ServeAustin, who work together to share impactful outreach tools and strategies, which could be a replicable model for identifying and reaching potential AC candidates in other states. Other ideas include partnering with outdoor recreation companies like REI to offer information sessions at stores; and "shadow days" with community

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organizations and schools. These strategies have served us well with enrollment rates of 95% (2015-16); 99% (2014-2015); and 100% (2013-2014).

9. COMMITMENT TO AC IDENTIFICATION - Throughout our history, we worked diligently to increase AC visibility. Due to the high profile nature of our projects, the AC identity is explained and highlighted in our regular media exposure as well as to community residents with whom our members interact. To ensure our members and staff speak eloquently about AC and what it means to be a member, we train on AC history, National Service history, and AC key principles and facts. All members have an opportunity at orientation to practice developing their AC elevator pitch. We also provide written talking points in member handbooks to give key facts and history points they can share with the press, partners, and community members. We also spend a lot of time talking with project partners about the AC program and we post signage with the AC logo and name. Our members are provided with and required to wear basic gear daily (3-5 shirts, 1 long sleeve brush shirt w/ AC and AYW logo). And as an organization, we ensure branding across all of our materials, social media, and organization website.

Organizational Capability

1. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING - The AYW mission is to provide young people with opportunities to build careers, strengthen communities, and improve the environment through education, on-the-job training, and service to others. AYW has 20 years AC and federal funding experience, 4 of which incorporated the cross-disciplinary model with disaster response as an integral part. Since first receiving AC funding in 1994, AYW worked to perfect the nationally-used crew structure we use today, with teams of 2 AC Crew Leaders per 8 AC Members with an experienced staff field coordinator shared among teams. Currently, we manage a State cross-disciplinary program in Texas and are a subgrantee for 2 National Programs out of the Corps Network. In 2015, our TxCC Disaster Response Team Program won the CNCS Harkin Excellence in AC Award for outstanding AC Programming. As highlighted previously, we are an accredited 21st CSC organization which is granted to Corps that have undergone an in-depth review of their general operations, financial management, risk management, and governance standards and have demonstrated accountability to both Corpsmembers and the communities in which they operate. AYW is headed by Chief Executive Officer PARC SMITH who began working at AYW in 1995 as an environmental science teacher and AC crew leader. Parc served on the 21st CSC Federal Advisory Committee, Corps Network Corps Council and Board of Directors, Public Lands Service Coalition (PLSC) Co-Chair, founding member and co-chair of the Gulf Corps Alliance (GCA), and TX

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Recreation Trails Grant Review Committee to name a few. If established, the Service and Conservation Corps will be coordinated by JODY KARR, AYW's current TxCC Program Director who has 16 years' experience in conservation, environmental education, and youth leadership development. ERIN LEHNEN, Assistant Program Director, has 8 years of AC and Conservation experience with Texas Conservation Corps. PAUL STUFFEL, Field Operations Manager, will provide oversight and support for five Field Coordinators and three Program Coordinators. Field Coordinators oversee crews, trouble-shoot, and serve as the primary point of contact on the ground for partners. Program Coordinators conduct partner outreach and development, and provide personnel coordination and management. Currently, four Field Coordinator positions and two Program Coordinator positions exist; a Louisiana Field Coordinator and Program Coordinator would be added through National Direct funding. Mr. Stuffel has 20 years' experience in outdoor education, habitat reclamation, and trail building, including 10 years supervising AC members. TxCC has experienced Field & Logistics, Recruitment & Outreach, Member, and Project Tracking Coordinators. In addition, the program has recently promoted Taylor Wolter, former Disaster Response Program Coordinator, to a new role entitled "New Partnership Development Coordinator" in anticipation of new opportunities in TX, LA, AR, and OK. AYW has extensive experience working with local, state, and national partners to develop and implement our program designs, ensuring they meet community needs and are accessing resources that ensure efficiency and cost savings. Past partners include TX Division of Emergency Management, local land management agencies, FEMA, CNCS Disaster Services Unit, TX Parks and Wildlife, National Park Service, and more. We also worked hard over these last several months (and submitted all State Consultation Forms) to build relationships with the 4 State Service Commissions and will continue those relationships.

2. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY - AYW has a long history of managing state and federal grants, with 20 years managing an AC State grant and/or being National AC program site. We built strong systems, policies, and processes that ensure compliance with federal rules and regulations: yearly file audits and maintain integrity of member files during the season; develop power point trainings for member and crew leaders on compliance issues such as activities and time and expense documentation; Program Director visits field offices regularly to ensure systems are followed consistently and trouble shoot any problems; review monthly all expense documents; and finally, we have other compliance issues we look at in terms of safety, health (camping related). The current State Commission we report to, OneStar Foundation, provides regular training for new and existing staff, for which we always attend, that provide information around grant, program, and fiscal

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management. We have a checklist of online training and resources that all new staff must access and review. The Director remains apprised of all new AC rules and regulations, enforces them, and provides continuing education to program staff and members. We pay great attention to member activities - all members are trained at orientation to understand and apply the terms allowable, unallowable, and prohibited activities. We discuss these terms in depth with our members and help them understand scenarios that might arise. We ensure members fully understand what is allowable by looking at their position descriptions and talking about the activities and events written in our AC grant. If an instance of non-compliance is identified, it is documented and our grant officers are contacted. If areas of non-compliance continue, we take disciplinary steps outlined in either our Member Service Agreement or staff manual. For AC members, these steps include suspension and termination and for staff, individualized corrective action plans and termination. AYW's accounting staff have extensive experience managing federal and local grants and attend trainings regularly. AYW uses Blackbaud Financial Edge fund accounting software to track grant awards and spending. Each funding stream is tracked separately to ensure proper use of all restricted funds and identify matching expenses. Budget-to-actual reports are reviewed by managers and the Finance Committee monthly and financial audits are performed annually by an independent accounting firm.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

1. COST EFFECTIVENESS

AYW's proposal includes a fixed amount budget consisting of \$805,800 CNCS funds and \$1,013,172 additional matching funds to support the program. The cost per MSY is \$13,430 which falls in the allowable cost. The budget includes expenses that are necessary for an environmental and disaster focused program start-up. The budget reflects a sensible and financially responsible approach to providing critical environmental and disaster response services. It includes the following staff positions with dedicated time percentages: program director (57%); field operations manager (57%); field and logistics coordinator (57%); new partnership development coordinator (76%); assistant program manager (57%); recruitment and outreach coordinator (57%); member coordinator (57%); project tracking coordinator (57%); 2 field coordinators (57%); coastal program coordinator (19%); coastal field coordinator (19%); program coordinator - LA (100%); field coordinator - LA (100%); program coordinator (19%); field coordinator (19%). These positions account for \$328,799 of the budget and allow for adequate programmatic and member support. Member living allowance and support costs account for \$1,031,177. Due to their added responsibilities of safety on site, daily tool list, contacting partners, some program logistics and being the program driver, crew leaders will receive a

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living allowance above the minimum. Member transportation includes the purchase of 2 fleet vehicles (1 truck and 1 van), maintenance of 4 other vehicles, and fuel for 10 vehicles. Program supply costs include: construction hand tools, chainsaws and accessories, cooking gear, camping gear, member uniforms, safety gear, trailer, gas-powered generator, project gear (respirators, chest waders, muck boots, etc.), emergency supplies, food (member service sites are isolated and members camp on-site), reference materials, member orientation supplies, office supplies, and member support, education, outreach and retention supplies. These two categories account for \$258,810 of the program budget. Member training, National Service criminal history checks, 3 GPS units, office space occupancy costs, telephone, 2 digital cameras add an additional \$27,810 to the budget. Staff travel for site visits and professional development conferences equals \$12,120. AYW has a federally approved indirect cost rate of 48.74% which adds an additional \$160,256.

AYW currently has \$715,000 of the \$1,013,172 match secured through various funders including private foundations and local, state and federal agencies. AYW staff is diligently working with the identified funders for the remaining match to finalize funding.

2. BUDGET ADEQUACY

AYW is applying for a fixed amount award based on our history of operating a multi-faceted AmeriCorps State program model, successfully blending multiple funding streams from public land managers, foundations and FEMA, where project partners are fluid based on the immediate needs of the communities and organizations served. AYW proposes 60 MSYs consisting of 44 full-time members and 32 half-time members serving in a full-time capacity. AYW budgeted adequate funds for multi-state coordination, support and grant implementation and the budget ensures appropriate staffing levels so members receive adequate training and supervision. The budget also includes adequate supply costs to support member activities in meeting the program performance measures. There are no extraneous items in the budget and the budget complies with the application guidelines.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

-The Service and Conservation Corps is planning public land maintenance activities for program years

Narratives

1-3.

-The consultation process with the state service commissions of Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Arkansas involved establishing a dialogue with each state commission to explore whether or not the services provided by American YouthWorks; AmeriCorps members would address an unmet need identified by the state commissions. After making the initial determination that our program would address unmet needs, we completed consultation forms for each state providing an overview of our program model and the activities performed by our AmeriCorps members.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics