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Executive Summary

The Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps program proposes to have 25 AmeriCorps members who will deliver more effective programming that addresses economic disparities contributing to or resulting from poverty, in 18 unique organizations throughout metropolitan DesMoines and surrounding areas. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for engaging volunteers to provide 3,500 hours of service, building partnerships and collaborations with 225 organizations, developing materials and programs, and other activities such that 90% of host sites demonstrate an increase in their effectiveness and 4,375 new beneficiaries receive support as a result of Member service. The AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 1,000 volunteers that will be engaged in providing direct services at the nonprofits where our Members are serving.

The CNCS investment of $325,000 will be matched with $315,495 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. PROBLEM/NEED

Iowa, like most states across the country, has seen significant improvement in quality of life for residents as compared to that experienced during the Great Recession. However, considerable disparities continue to persist among particular pockets of Iowa's populace. According to the Annie E. Casey Kids Count report, the number of children living in poverty across Iowa has increased 44% since 2000. For African American families poverty levels are almost three times that as the poverty level for the entire state -- 13.9 % for all Iowan families versus 39% for Iowa's African American families (Munson, K., "Black-white disparities persist in Iowa", Des Moines Register, 2015). For Latinos, the state's largest minority population, 21% of families are living in poverty (Bureau of Labor Statistics). As Iowa continues to grow increasingly diverse, pathways and supports must be in place to ensure that Iowa's immigrants, be they from other states such as Illinois or other countries, have access to the resources and supports to interrupt cycles of poverty.

The demand for nonprofit support is on a long-term upward trend as pockets of Iowa's citizens struggle to gain economic footing. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Iowan nonprofit sector has undergone significant growth, from 10.8% of all private sector employment in 2007 to 11.5% in 2012 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily, http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted_20141021.htm). During this same time period, the revenues per organization declined. The trend towards more, smaller organizations, has implications for the
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scale and sustainability of efforts, and ultimately the ability of Iowa's nonprofit sector to meet community needs. This mirrors the results of the Nonprofit Finance Fund's "2015 State of the Nonprofit Sector" survey. Of the Iowa-based respondents that work primarily or exclusively with low-income communities, 83% indicated their demand for services increased in 2014 while only 53% were able to meet this growing demand. Moreover, 88% projected that the demand for service would further increase in 2015.

2. INTERVENTION

Public Allies proposes to help organizations in Des Moines and surrounding areas expand their capacity to meet growing needs by leveraging the city's untapped human assets and applying this potential to the urgent needs facing nonprofit organizations. In doing so, we will not only increase the poverty-reducing services being provided in Des Moines, we will multiply the support for the area's economic recovery by placing Iowans serving as AmeriCorps Members on pathways to sustainable education and career.

Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Members will provide 40 hours of capacity building interventions per week over the course of 10 months. These capacity building interventions will include: engaging volunteers or developing the support systems to better recruit and manage volunteers; developing a plan and materials to support outreach efforts to potential clients; designing or improving the way an organization promotes programming; conducting a community assets and needs assessment and supporting the development of programming in response to the assessment; developing partnerships to expand or improve programming; and developing ways to measure performance or improve programming based upon performance data.

3. THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL

Public Allies' social change theory focuses on providing opportunities for organizations to build their capacity by leveraging existing, under-utilized human assets. In "High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact," the authors identify three types of capacity required for organizations focused on performance and impact: the capacity to deliver programs, the capacity to expand programs, and the capacity to adapt (Letts, Ryan, Grossman, 1999). The Public Allies AmeriCorps apprenticeship is designed to increase such capacity through the engagement of a highly diverse cohort of full-time AmeriCorps members that reflect the demographic makeup of the communities being served. In Iowa, 18 community and faith-based organizations, "Partner Organizations," using evidence-based approaches to address economic disparities and related disparities in housing, hunger, health, education, and economic development, will employ the service
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of 25 Public Allies AmeriCorps Members to make them more effective in the ability to deliver, expand, and adapt programs to meet the needs of those grappling with poverty. Through intentionally engaging a cohort of Members that is over-representative of people of color, those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, those without post-secondary degrees, and those under- or unemployed, Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps is helping develop nonprofits’ adaptive capacity to identify uncommon talent and reducing poverty by creating pathways to sustainable careers for Iowans.

Prior to the term of service, each Partner Organization completes a pre-service, capacity self-assessment modeled after the McKinsey Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT), a tool broadly noted as a best practice and widely used across the nonprofit sector. This assessment benchmarks an organization’s level of capacity prior to engaging a Public Allies AmeriCorps Member and is used to determine where AmeriCorps Members are best suited to make an impact: program development and delivery; outreach; performance measurement; community assessment; community awareness and engagement; partnerships and collaboration; or volunteer generation. The results of the assessment are used to develop service descriptions containing service objectives and output targets that directly address the organization’s outlined capacity need.

Capacity building projects completed in prior terms exemplify the ways Public Allies Iowa Members meet organizations' capacity to deliver programs, expand programs, and adapt: implementing a community engagement plan to improve emergency preparedness and enhancing an emergency volunteer training curriculum; improving financial literacy services by building collaborations with local banks and financial institutions and developing and disseminating financial literacy outreach materials; and helping adults achieve their high school equivalency diploma by conducting best practice research related to adult basic education, creating barrier assessments and screening tools, and identifying retention strategies for students with multiple barriers.

Over the course of their service, the 25 Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Members will be responsible for providing capacity building service to 18 organizations (performance measure output G3-3.4 = 18) -- engaging 1,000 volunteers to provide 3,500 hours of direct service and establishing partnerships with 225 organizations. By the end of the term, 90% of graduating Members' service objectives will be met and at least 90% of organizations hosting graduates will report an increase in program effectiveness (performance measure outcome G3-3.10 = 13). As a result of Members' activities, the collaborations developed, and the additional volunteers engaged, some 4,375 new beneficiaries will receive services that address their housing, educational, health, and basic human needs.

Both participatory organizational assessments and project-based technical assistance, such as those
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delivered by Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Members, are best practices noted for improving the capacity of organizations in the report "Promising Practices for Improving the Capacity of Faith- and Community-Based Organizations" (Fink & Branch for the Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). Research also indicates that when applied intentionally and correctly, capacity-building investments yield results. In a study on the impact of its Organizational Effectiveness grant program, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation found that the investment in an organization’s capacity has significant measurable impact on programs and services: program quality and reach improve, organizations become more strategic with programs, and visibility and community support for their programs are increased (TCC Group, "The David and Lucile Packard Foundation OE Goldmine Research Project Final Report", October 2011). Our own program results bear this out.

4. EVIDENCE BASE
Public Allies' external evaluation, an outcome study which included data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement, was completed in September 2015 by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Research. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques such as surveying, existing data analysis, and key informant interviews.

The research provides preliminary evidence of the program’s impact towards improving Partner Organizations’ ability to meet their missions. To determine the changes evident in partners’ technical capacity at the end of the program, evaluators examined a new pre- and post-assessment survey with scaled, research-tested questions, which was administered at the beginning and end of the program year to all Members via Survey Monkey. In addition, evaluators conducted statistical analysis of data from our partner organization capacity building assessment (the existing tool used by the program to gather performance measure data) and then compared capacity building results with demographic data of Allies. Detailed results (including raw data) can be found in the external evaluation report, which is attached to this application.

The research was done on 395 graduating Public Allies Members, including those serving in Iowa. The technical capacity measured included: the ability to improve, expand, or create new programming that that effectively responds to constituent needs; the ability to reach those in need of services; having the appropriate tools/materials to deliver programming; the ability to assess impact and use performance data to improve programming; the ability to understand community/constituent needs and respond appropriately; the propensity to collaborate to improve programming; and having
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systems to effectively engage and manage volunteers. The mean technical capacity scores for all Members indicates technical capacity increases were available across all categories of capacity building activities implemented by Members, except in the expansion/creation of programming where capacity remained the same, and financial resource development where there was a slight decrease in capacity. Nationally, the evaluation found that Public Allies Members were "most successful" when engaged to create new programs, build upon existing programs, or outreach and engage with communities served by Partner Organizations.

The evaluation further lends burgeoning support to Public Allies' premise that Members from disconnected backgrounds (economically disadvantaged and/or non-digreeed) are able to increase organizational capacity as effectively as those from connected backgrounds (college-educated and not economically disadvantaged). Using independent sample t-tests to compare results between the two groups indicates that the majority of capacity change scores for both connected and disconnected Members were positive, indicating increased capacity in almost every category. Further, there was no statistically significant difference in scores between "connected" and "disconnected" Members, indicating the magnitude of capacity change in each area did not differ between the two demographic groups.

The diversity of Public Allies Members was shown to enhance the adaptive capacity of our partners. Using descriptive statistics to examine supervisor survey responses to a question about the impact the program had on supervisor notions of how to identify qualified volunteers and employees from diverse backgrounds, implied that "involvement in the Public Allies program can help break down prejudices and biases about the skill sets and trains individuals need in order to be successful in the nonprofit or governmental sectors."

In addition, internally analyzed data indicates organizations hosting Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Members experienced capacity gains. Between 2012 and 2015, of the organizations completing year end assessments, 37.5% indicated they experienced an increase in the number of people served at the organization, 46.9% indicated an improvement in the level or quality of services, and 75% reported they were able to start a new project or program.

While the results of the study suggest that Allies are more effective in building organizational capacity in certain areas, further study is needed to determine why that is the case and what the implications are for program design. We are using the results of the external evaluation as a launching point for exploring questions related to Member and partner recruitment, the development of effective position descriptions, and our organizational capacity assessment tools. In regards to Financial Resource
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Development, for which there was a slight decrease in capacity, we are exploring whether to remove this category from our capacity assessment since fundraising is restricted to 10% of a Member's time and therefore may not be appropriate to include. Further information is needed about why our partner organizations select this category as a capacity focus.

5. NOTICE PRIORITY

Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps addresses the priority of increasing Economic Opportunity, both in the service being delivered by our Members, which supports organizations addressing one or more of the factors contributing to or deriving from poverty, and by engaging Opportunity Youth as AmeriCorps Members. For the 2017-18 program year, 10% of our Members will be young people meeting the definition of Opportunity Youth.

Our cohort mirrors the makeup of Des Moines, with an emphasis on engaging an over-representation of populations that have been traditionally disconnected from opportunity. We seek to engage a class that is diverse in race and ethnicity, level of education, and socio-economic background. Between 2013 and 2016 37% of Iowa's Public Allies AmeriCorps Members were persons of color, 71% were women, 6% identified as LGBTQ, and 4% identified as having disabilities. Seventy percent (70%) of Members serving since 2014 have been from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and 44% indicated their parents did not graduate from college. Cohort diversity ensures the program offers a safe but challenging space where Members are invited to work with and learn from peers that are all equally talented, but from vastly different walks of life. We foster an environment where the life experience of a Member from the most impoverished neighborhoods in Des Moines is equal in value to that of the Drake University graduate, and the two have an opportunity to work together, leveraging their varied skills to deliver service. Without this diversity, the program environment would reinforce the disconnection and segregation most of our economically disadvantaged Members have experienced throughout most of their lives.

6. MEMBER TRAINING

Orientation. Prior to enrollment, Public Allies introduces applicants to AmeriCorps minimum eligibility requirements, the requirements for successful completion of a service term, and the rigorous expectations for participation in the program. This introduction ensures applicants carefully consider the commitment they would undertake should they join the program. Orientation continues at the point of enrollment, when on the first day of service Members are taken through a guided, group review of member contracts, policies and procedures, performance measures, and standards for excellence. Group orientation continues for several days as Members are introduced to Public Allies
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and the communities in which they will serve, learn the history of National Service, and participate in
team-building and targeted skill-building workshops that prepare them to excel in their service
projects at host sites. This group orientation lasts approximately one week. Afterwards, Members begin
service at their Partner Organization, where during the first week at placement they receive an
orientation to host site operations and supervisor expectations.

Review and acknowledgement of prohibited activities is central to the orientation process. Each
Member is thoroughly oriented to prohibited activities during initial Member intake processes and
during the formal orientation as the Member contract is reviewed. To further underscore the
importance of abiding by AmeriCorps regulations, staff emphasize the types of situations that should
be avoided and that Members should consult with Public Allies staff in instances where their proposed
activities appear questionable, "when in doubt, reach out." This discussion also raises Member
awareness to indirect prohibited activities, and that volunteers recruited or managed also cannot
engage in the prohibited activities. A review of Member position descriptions prior to service ensures in
advance that Member service objectives are free of prohibited activities, and the monthly review of
member service activities by Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Program Managers ensures compliance
with regulations during the term.

Training. Members come together as a cohort regularly throughout the term for Member
development training. Our training program is designed to enhance Members' ability to competently
deliver their service projects while simultaneously developing their civic leadership and cultivating the
skills required to successfully move into a career or post-secondary education. Public Allies leadership
training is rooted in our core values: diversity/inclusion, focus on assets, collaboration, integrity,
continuous learning, and innovation. Training focuses on evolving the Member's practice of these
values such that they can be effective community builders, with an ability to create community
solutions from whatever position they hold, be it CEO, project manager, or line staff.

To help them achieve the objectives of their service projects, Members receive 11 skills-based, capacity
building trainings within the first three months of the term. This capacity building workshop series
launches with an "Allies as Capacity Builders" training which walks Members through the definition
of capacity building, how it differs from direct service, their roles as capacity builders, and the
expectation that they leverage their assets--experiences, relationships, knowledge--to support their
Partner Organizations. The other capacity building workshops delivered include: documenting
activities and outcomes, volunteer engagement and management, project planning and management,
an introduction to asset-based community development, nonprofit 101, performance measurement
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and using data, community outreach, group and meeting facilitation, and community mapping. These core trainings are designed to present the foundational information, concepts, and skills Members will utilize throughout their term. Workshop learning plans are designed around adult-learning principles, and incorporate both instruction in core concepts and significant opportunity for dialogue and in-workshop application. Most training sessions are delivered by volunteer local experts. To enhance civic participation, Members participate in dialogues and critical reflections to connect their service to larger social issues. To enhance the self-esteem and self-efficacy of Members so they can pursue educational and career goals, Members receive critical self-awareness training such as conflict resolution, time management, networking, and giving and receiving feedback, key areas of learning for our Opportunity Youth Members who lack experience in the workforce.

7. MEMBER SUPERVISION

Public Allies selects Partner Organizations through a competitive process in which they are vetted by staff to determine if the organization is eligible to host an AmeriCorps Member and has the demonstrated need to build programmatic capacity. In order to host our Members, Partner Organizations must identify an experienced direct supervisor who can commit to 1) providing daily supervision and support to the Member, 2) ensuring that the Member has the proper resources available to him/her and is on target to achieve service goals, and 3) maintain a close partnership with a Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Program Manager to ensure the Member's experience is compliant, relevant and meaningful. Expectations of our Partner Organizations are clearly defined in the host agency contract and policies and procedures, which each organization agrees to uphold. These documents are thoroughly reviewed during a mandatory pre-service orientation. The Partner Organization orientation particularly emphasizes familiarity with prohibited activities and ensuring they do not take place.

The Program Manager regularly coordinates with the host site supervisor to troubleshoot, reflect on the partnership’s success, and when necessary, create plans to ensure Members can successfully complete their term. The Program Manager ensures Members receive coaching on personal, educational and career goals. Supervision of the Member is a collaboration between the Partner Organization and Public Allies, and this is reflected in the mid-term and end-of-term evaluations, which take into consideration the feedback of both the Partner Organization supervisor and the Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Program Manager to ensure that the evaluation reflects the Member's performance at the host site, at trainings and in the implementation of Team Service Projects. A Program Manager also monitors the Member's experience at the host site, reviewing Member
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monthly service reflections and conducting at least two 3-way meetings with the Member and Supervisor over the term. This allows for smoother and more timely intervention if problems arise at the placement. In the instance that a Member must begin service prior to the findings of their statewide or FBI criminal history checks being returned, the Member will be physically accompanied at both the Partner Organization and Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps by someone approved to have access to vulnerable populations.

8. MEMBER EXPERIENCE

Public Allies is grounded in the conviction that everyone leads. It is this premise that is the undercurrent for how we prepare our Members to achieve impact during their service terms and beyond. Well-respected as a top community service and leadership development organization, Public Allies is known for excellence in providing a strong Member experience that prepares participants for careers and produces a lifelong commitment to public service. Public Allies' evaluation suggests that among alumni that were not degreed at the time of participation, 46.1% were planning to attend college, were enrolled and working towards a degree, or had recently completed a degree within the year following graduation from the program. The evaluation also indicates that the majority of alumni are employed after participation in the program, and their current employment provides more responsibilities, higher wages, increased access to health insurance, and was a stepping stone towards their desired career. Most employed alumni work in the nonprofit sector.

There are two key focuses for Public Allies Member development: leadership training and continuous learning. The Public Allies leadership training program focuses on cultivating a leadership style grounded in three key beliefs: (1) leadership is an action that many can take, not a position that only a few can hold; (2) leadership is about taking personal and social responsibility to work with others for common goals; and (3) leadership is about the practice of values that engage diverse community members and groups to work together effectively. Finally, the training program focuses on teaching members how to effectively achieve results in the workplace.

Along with the formal training program, Members are coached through a structured continuous learning process that extends through their entire term of service. The Public Allies continuous learning process is often seen as a key added value to our Partner Organizations. Each Member is supported in their personal and professional development by the host site supervisor, a Public Allies Program Manager and auxiliary staff whose role is to connect the Members with community and social supports. This support takes the form of guided coaching, opportunities to reflect on goals, and 360-degree feedback assessments, where key stakeholders provide feedback and assess Member...
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performance and leadership. At the end of the term, Members participate in presentations of learning, where they share their reflections on the impact of their service and leadership with an audience of community stakeholders.

The intentional cultivation of our Members' leadership skills allows them to have even greater impact on their Partner Organizations than that of other entry-level volunteers or employees. "Are They Really Ready to Work?", a report of employers' perspectives on the skills required to succeed in the 21st century workforce, found that professionalism, oral and written communications, teamwork and collaboration, and critical thinking and problem solving skills were the most important skills cited among 400 employers. Nationally, when Partner Organizations were asked how our Members compare to average entry-level employees, 64% indicated our Members had above average or well-above average skills working in a team and collaborating, 53% indicated our Members displayed above average creativity and innovation, and 49% indicated our Members demonstrated above average critical thinking and problem solving skills. And despite their relative inexperience in the workforce and their lack of experience in the nonprofit sector, our Members met or exceeded 97% of their service objectives.

Public Allies approaches civic education experientially and uses dialogues and critical reflection processes to help Allies connect their service to larger social issues and to ideas such as democracy and volunteerism. During weekly gatherings of the entire Member cohort, Public Allies facilitates exercises to help the Members change their way of thinking from that of a passive "student" to participant and facilitator who is in charge of her or his own experience. This leads to creative ways of responding to community problems and initiating solutions that encourage collective action and uncovering both individual and community skills, capacities and resources. Such reflection exercises help Members connect their service, and those of others involved in national service programs to the national and global efforts to create a more just and equitable society.

The program is designed to allow members to learn from one another. Public Allies recruits an intentionally diverse cohort of Members from a variety of races, ethnicities, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds to reflect the diverse tapestry from Des Moines and across Iowa. Our recruitment efforts are grassroots and community-based. We engage in a year-round recruitment process by conducting informational sessions at local high schools, colleges and universities, human service and youth serving organizations, employment agencies, and word of mouth from staff, advisory board members, alumni, Partner Organizations, and other collaborative partners. Our goal in these efforts is to attract a highly competitive and diverse pool of candidates that reflects the
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community in which we work. As a result, over 37% of our Members are persons of color, over 71% women, 70% come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds without degrees or extensive work experience, and about 39% have degrees. The overwhelming majority of our Members come from Iowa. Each Member, despite their background, is selected for their talent and potential, and a key transaction during the program cycle is the exchange between Members. Meeting weekly, Members enrich each other and help team Members broaden their understanding of people and communities by sharing personal experiences, perspectives, and lessons from placement and team service projects. Our AmeriCorps Members will also have the opportunity for occasional service outside the focus of this program in order to better understand and benefit their community and to participate in National Days of Service. These direct service hours may be counted towards the Member's term of service if they do not interfere with their normal service hours or conflict with prohibited activities, the service is approved by the host site supervisor and Program Manager, and the supervisor of the service activity signs an agreement certifying the service and hours performed.

9. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

Public Allies is deeply committed to ensuring that all AmeriCorps activity is branded appropriately and effectively. We see ourselves as partners in raising the visibility of AmeriCorps, CNCS, and the impact of national service on communities. As such, our commitment to effective co-branding is codified in our national branding guidelines. Our websites, Member recruitment portals, and printed materials all prominently display the AmeriCorps logo, and our Members, after being thoroughly oriented to their roles as AmeriCorps Members, are issued AmeriCorps co-branded t-shirts to wear throughout the term. Within each contract executed with our Partner Organizations, our Members are identified as a resource provided as a result of an AmeriCorps grant and each site is given an AmeriCorps sign to display in the areas where Members are serving. We also require that Member business cards identify the participant as a "Public Allies AmeriCorps Apprentice." Each Member takes the AmeriCorps oath to "Get things done" and sees themselves not only as Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Members but also as part of the greater national service movement. Our Members actively participate in statewide AmeriCorps events and look forward to these opportunities to get to know other AmeriCorps Members. The Members' identification with the national service movement is enhanced through participation in national days of service such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of service and AmeriCorps awareness-building events during AmeriCorps Week, and Mayors/County Day of Recognition.

Organizational Capability

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1. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING
Public Allies, founded in 1992, exists to create a just and equitable society and the diverse leadership to sustain it. For over two decades Public Allies has served as the premier access point to national service for young people whose potential and promise are too frequently overlooked, dismissed, or ignored. Since our founding, Public Allies has come to be regarded as a comprehensive program model that blends community service, nonprofit capacity building, civic engagement and leadership development with best practice evaluation processes. Public Allies now exists in 24 communities across the United States with close to 6,000 AmeriCorps members having served to date.

As the direct grantee, Public Allies National Office supports the design, delivery and monitoring of our AmeriCorps program. The National Office currently manages multiple AmeriCorps State competitive and formula grants and has managed a national direct grant since 1993. Public Allies takes a team approach to administering and managing AmeriCorps grants. Vice President of Programs, Jenise Terrell oversees a national Program Team that works collaboratively to provide support to local sites. Fiscal management of the grants is overseen by the Director of Finance and Administration who provides financial technical assistance and monitoring to Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps. The Program Team provides the technical infrastructure to manage the AmeriCorps grant in the form of a web-based Member timekeeping and service documentation system. This team also conducts compliance monitoring, a central program guidance repository, and training and technical assistance in program delivery to Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps.

Public Allies contracts with the Urban Dreams to serve as Operating Partner of Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps. For 20 years INRC has critical human services support to address issues that affect the quality of life of Iowa’s most vulnerable residents. As subgrantee to Public Allies National Office, Urban Dreams will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Public Allies AmeriCorps grant in Iowa. Under the leadership of Urban Dream’s Associate Executive Director, Public Allies Iowa will be led by a full-time site director, who is responsible for managing the program’s daily operations and staff, building the relevant external relationships required to support the program, and overseeing program compliance. Two full-time Program Managers are responsible for Member coaching, training, recruitment, and host site partnership management.

In keeping with the commitment to continuous learning, Public Allies seeks out the feedback, advice and consultancy of community members and partners to help give shape to the program. Annually, both Members and host site supervisors are asked to complete anonymous satisfaction surveys that seek to learn about the quality of their experiences, their perceptions of program impact and feedback
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for improvement. Public Allies also engages community leaders as volunteer trainers and mentors to our Members. Lastly, in the first quarter of 2015, Public Allies underwent an extensive national strategic planning effort. Over 1,400 stakeholders were engaged locally and throughout the country to provide feedback on Public Allies' future direction. Interviews were conducted locally with previous Partner Organization supervisors, program alumni, community leaders, and staff of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. The data from these interviews was used to help prepare the organization's formal 5 year strategy.

2. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Public Allies ensures program compliance and accountability through a holistic approach in which staff, site supervisors and Members are all accountable to the rules and regulations associated with public funds. The foundation of our approach consists of national tools such as our Program Standards and Local Site Guide, which outline the compliance expectations for Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps and Members; and our organizational Scorecard, a rigorous annual assessment that measures holistic program health in three areas: compliance, quality, and impact. These tools form the basis for our commitment to integrity and continuous learning throughout program delivery. The National Program Team continuously reviews and updates the Minimum Standards and its "Core Concepts" training series which covers all AmeriCorps regulations and Public Allies program requirements.

During the program year, our commitment to compliance begins with the recruitment of host sites. Public Allies staff work with each Partner Organization to create a meaningful position description that is free of direct or indirect prohibited activities, and does leverages service to enhance activities without supplanting, displacing or duplicating efforts. Our focus on prevention involves orienting partners to AmeriCorps regulations, particularly prohibited activities, during pre-service orientation, and monitoring for prohibited activities in a file audit review which takes place 30 days after program start. During the service term, staff regularly review Member service activity logs (filed online monthly) for prohibited activities, monitor Member stipend payments, and meet with Members and host site supervisors to ensure Member activities are compliant. In addition, a national staff person may conduct a site visit to review files, interview Members and Partner Organization supervisors, and attend trainings and team service project meetings. These activities provide further information about the holistic health of the site. During the year, the National Office supports Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps in submitting all required reports to the state commission.

If possible prohibited activities or other compliance breaches are detected, focus shifts to intervention
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(clarifying whether or not prohibited activities occurred) and if necessary, corrective actions (up to, and including, disallowing Member hours or removing Members from the host site). If Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps and/or Partner Organizations demonstrate an inability to comply, they are subject to actions from Public Allies National Office such as increased monitoring, placing the partnership on probation, or terminating the relationship.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps is requesting a fixed cost per Member Service Year of $13,000. The total program budget is $640,195 or $25,607.80 per Member. In addition to the AmeriCorps grant funds requested ($325,000), the balance of funds needed to operate the program ($315,195) will come from cash and in-kind resources. Partner Organizations will contribute a cost share of $12,700 per Member towards Member stipends and FICA which is $15,071 per Member. Other non-living allowance expenses include salaries and benefits for three full-time staff ($145,000), Member health insurance and workers comp insurance ($58,000), criminal history checks ($1,800), retreats and training ($12,500), and other program related expenses.

Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps is requesting a cost per MSY of 13,000 -- level to AmeriCorps funding granted during the prior grant cycle. To operate effectively, this program’s success relies on partnerships with nonprofit organizations to host the AmeriCorps members. As outlined above, Iowa’s nonprofit sector is trending towards smaller organizations with minimal to moderate infrastructure. As such, many past partner organizations and potential AmeriCorps hosts were unable to bear the full weight of the $14,000 contribution, previously required. At a lower entry point, we are confident in the ability to secure placements for all 25 Members. To offset the lower Partner Organization contribution, we have decreased some expenses and are requesting to maintain level AmeriCorps funding.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

In 2015, Public Allies conducted an external evaluation of the organizations and Members participating in programming during the 2014-15 program year. The study included AmeriCorps Members from all Public Allies sites, including full-time Members serving with the Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps program. The resulting analysis demonstrated some burgeoning evidence that Public Allies had a moderate influence on graduates moving pursuing degree programs or securing sustainable employment. At the time the evaluation was being completed, Public Allies also completed a nationwide strategic planning effort calling for more deliberate programming to be delivered to
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AmeriCorps Members during the term of service to ensure 100% of graduating AmeriCorps Allies successfully transition to one of three pathways: 1) into a 2- or 4-year degree program; 2) into sustainable employment; or 3) into another term of service. During the 2016-17 program year, Public Allies launched "Pathways," a series of two-year interventions, beginning during the AmeriCorps term and continuing on for one year following graduation, ensuring every Member has the knowledge, skills, belief, and support to pursue their desired post-service plans.

This evaluation plan describes an alternative impact evaluation of the Public Allies Apprenticeship, to learn more about the impact of its new "Pathways" initiative on its Members during the term and following graduation.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Public Allies Pathways initiative is a continuum of supports that Public Allies provides for participants and alumni and is particularly focused on graduates who are likely to face systemic barriers upon graduation. Ultimately, Pathways is designed to ensure that our network of diverse and values-driven leaders achieve positions of influence and advance social justice and equity. Pathways achieves this by ensuring that during the apprenticeship, and in that critical first year following, each PA Alum is either enrolled in college and/or employed in sustainable, career-advancing position.

In collaboration with local and national strategic partners, Public Allies will deliver programmatic interventions focused on:

* Increasing access to the people, institutions, and systems to help Allies pursue their chosen path;
* Enhancing Allies' professional skills;
* Introducing Allies to information and opportunities to help make college more affordable; and
* Providing social and emotional supports to ensure Allies can persist through the apprenticeship and in the 12 months following graduation.

PROGRAM THEORY, LOGIC MODEL AND OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

Public Allies uses a logic model which outlines the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes that define the success of the program. The program’s outputs are documented and monitored through Public Allies' Personal Impact & Service Documentation system (PISD), an online database which tracks Ally progress during the program.

The evaluation will explore the short and intermediate-term impacts that the Public Allies apprenticeship program has on its Members. In particular, the evaluation will focus on the pilot initiative "Pathways" which offers a more targeted focus on leveraging the Public Allies apprenticeship as a catalyst for future employment and higher education, particularly for those who are disconnected
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when they enter the program.
Short-term outcomes will include whether Members increase their leadership abilities through our national curriculum, participation in a diverse cohort, regular reflection, and opportunities to apply learning at the service site. Intermediate term outcomes will be focused on whether Members achieve and sustain their education and/or employment goals within three months of graduation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THIS STUDY
The evaluation will address the following key questions. Whether the question addresses "impact" or "process" measures is indicated for each.
1. What impact did the Pathways initiative have on employment and higher education outcomes for members? (impact)
a. Do these differ by Ally demographics, including socioeconomic factors? (impact)
b. Are there specific Pathways interventions (mentoring, networking, coaching) which, when emphasized, lead to better intermediate outcomes, particularly for disconnected youth? (process)

STUDY COMPONENTS
PA proposes to conduct a Quasi-Experimental Design evaluation that compares outcomes during the apprenticeship and afterwards between members of Public Allies who received specific "Pathways" interventions (specific, evidence-based interventions along with a codified national curriculum and Individual Development Process to set goals for after the program) to those who did not. The study will span 27 months of data collection, and will compare two groups: 1) A control group of Allies from the 2015-16 class who did not receive Pathways interventions (this group includes Allies from 20 sites across the country); and 2) A treatment group of Allies from the 2016-17 class who received Pathways (Allies from three sites in New York, Washington, DC and Chicago). The control group data cannot be gathered in the 2016-17 program year because that group of sites has begun piloting Pathways in order to fully implement the program in 2017-18.

The evaluation will specifically examine the differences in the outcomes of employment and higher education. It will also explore differences in self-confidence and self-efficacy. Results will be disaggregated based on Members' levels of education and economic backgrounds. "Level of education" is defined as whether Allies have an advanced degree, including bachelor, associate and technical degrees. Whether an Ally is "economically disadvantaged" as defined according to the guidelines set forth by CNCS.

The study design will be largely based on data that is already being collected by the Public Allies national office, which includes:
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* Pre and post-apprenticeship scaled assessment of leadership and 21st century skills;
* Monthly data from Members in the 2016-17 class documenting the number of interventions received, including coaching sessions, mentoring, networking meetings, applications, etc.;
* Member surveys at the point of graduation, then three months after the program, measuring attainment of employment and enrollment in higher education; and
* Demographic data from all members, including employment, education and economic status prior to enrolling in the program.

Changes will be measured at the point of graduation for each class, then at three months afterwards. The main strength of this evaluation design is that it makes efficient use of data collection tools and processes already in place at Public Allies site. It also contributes to building long term data that Public Allies will use to analyze changes in program outputs and outcomes over time. In addition, the design takes advantage of a unique opportunity to compare outcomes for the Pathways interventions in its initial full year of implementation at three sites.

A limitation of the study is that it uses a previous year's data and compares data from two different years, which may raise questions about the broad economic conditions that can affect employment overall, and subsequently affect Members' job attainment in a particular year.

In addition, this evaluation will examine the impact of the Pathways program is its first full year of implantation for the three treatment sites, and there may be lessons learned that lead to stronger implementation in subsequent years. Overall, we believe that the potential benefits for the evaluation outweigh these limitations.

A scaled pre and post-assessment (developed for our 2014 external impact evaluation) was administered on control group participants during the 2015-16 program year and will be administered on treatment participants in the 2016-17 program. This data will be analyzed to compare the results at the point of graduation and three months afterwards.

Process data will be collected from currently serving Members through existing data collection systems used by Public Allies, and outcome data will be collected via online surveys. Demographic information, which will be necessary for the proposed research comparisons based on Allies' levels of education and economic backgrounds, will be collected from Public Allies' existing data sources. Invitations to complete surveys will be sent through email requests with standard follow-up by the evaluators to increase response.

ANALYSIS PLAN

An external evaluator will be engaged to analyze data. Both quantitative and qualitative methods will
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be used, including, but not limited to: Frequencies for descriptions, cross-tabulations for group comparisons, regression to obtain odds ratios, paired T-tests for examining changes between the pre-tests and post-tests by survey item or scale, non-parametric tests for ordinal level data to measure changes on items between pre-tests and post-tests, and Crohnbach's alpha test for measuring scale reliability. Data will be aggregated on a national level and, as appropriate, on a state level for Wisconsin, Connecticut, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana to meet the requirements of the National Direct and State Commission grants as long as the number of participants is large enough to maintain confidentiality.

Public Allies has engaged the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies to conduct this evaluation and produce the resulting reports.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

2017/18 Resolutions: Questions about performance measurement tool were addressed in the performance measure section.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics