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Executive Summary

Campus Compact of the Mountain West proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program serving in Colorado and Wyoming that will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of $73,344 will be matched with $53,601 in grant match and $100,000 in private funding. No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Rationale:
The founding principles of American democracy rely upon an informed and engaged citizenry. Despite the critical importance of an informed and engaged citizenry, civic learning for America's youth appears to be at a standstill.(1) Only 23% of students who took the National Assessment of Educational Progress for civics in 2014 tested at proficient or above, up only 1% from 1998.(2) Research shows that there are five fundamental challenges to improve the quality and accessibility of civic learning: 1) Ensuring that civic education is high quality has not been a state or federal priority; 2) Social studies textbooks do not facilitate the development of civic skills; 3) Upper-income students are better served by our schools than are lower-income individuals; 4) Cutbacks in funds available to schools make implementing changes in civic learning difficult, and; 5) The polarized political climate increases the likelihood that curricular changes will be cast as advancing a partisan agenda.(3) Given competing educational priorities and standards, why is the lack of civic learning and engagement throughout the preschool through higher education (P-20) pipeline a cause for concern? P-20 civic learning and engagement prepares individuals for civic participation that contributes to the civic health of communities. Strong civic health leads to robust and resilient communities, better governance and a more inclusive democracy, improved community outcomes such as health and education, and a greater ability to weather economic crises.(4) Simply put, when people are civically engaged, they are healthier, and their communities are stronger. The focus of this planning grant is on the civic learning and engagement of young people to ensure that both current and future generations have the skills, attitudes, and dispositions to secure the ongoing vitality of their communities.

In 2013, organizations and individuals representing Colorado and Wyoming came together to form the Colorado Civic Health Network following the release of the inaugural Colorado Civic Health Index in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship. From that larger group of founding organizations and individuals the P-20 Civic Learning and Engagement Collaborative (herein referred
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to as the Collaborative) developed to address specific civic learning and engagement needs across the preschool through higher education pipeline. The most immediate critical issues uncovered through the Civic Health Index included: 1) Civic opportunities are not equitable across rural and urban communities, across socioeconomic groups, across educational attainment levels, and across race and ethnicity; 2) Young people in this region are eager to participate in civic life but do not feel they have the skills or knowledge to do so confidently; 3) The partnership divide between P-12 systems and higher education systems remains vast and creates barriers to creating consistent, agreed-upon, and evidence-based metrics for civic learning and engagement across the P-20 pipeline.(5)

In 2015, the Collaborative hosted community dialogues in five diverse regions within Colorado (Denver, Durango/Bayfield, Glenwood Springs, Greeley, and Pueblo) to better understand the civic learning and engagement opportunities and gaps within those communities, based on the issues uncovered within the Civic Health Index. Participants included high school and college students, government officials, representatives from community organizations, and members of the Collaborative. Over 80 individuals participated in the in-person community dialogues and another 110 responded via electronic survey. Through these community dialogues and surveys, several common themes arose: 1) There is a lack of coordination and intentionality between P-12 and higher education civic learning and engagement opportunities and agreed-upon outcomes; 2) Students are eager to become engaged in their communities but feel they have neither access to information about opportunities nor the skills to effectively volunteer, and; 3) There is a real opportunity with the creation of the Collaborative to develop infrastructure and programming across the P-12 through higher education pipeline that can be sustained through thoughtful and effective campus, school, and community partnerships. Based upon these key findings, the Collaborative will focus resources from the CNCS planning grant in concert with organizational match to develop a consistent, agreed-upon, and evidence-based program design to address the civic learning and engagement needs of P-20 students in Colorado and Wyoming.

Addressing the gaps and opportunities derived from the community dialogues, this planning grant will focus on recommendations for higher education institutions set forth in Guardians of Democracy.(6) Primarily, the Collaborative will focus on one recommendation as the primary intervention for the planning grant: Help K-12 schools develop and implement civic learning programs through partnerships with higher education, in part, by encouraging post-secondary students to volunteer as
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"civics mentors", especially in disadvantaged K-12 schools. The Collaborative is currently moving forward with another of the recommendations focused on teacher professional development around evidence-based civics education programs, funded through a local foundation. The planning grant will allow the Collaborative to convene K-12 and higher education stakeholders and design an intervention that builds on the evidence-based proven practices for civic learning and engagement, that engages students from across the P-20 pipeline, that includes sustainability as a central tenant, and that is replicable for other states and regions.

Program Design:
In order for students to cultivate a commitment to civic participation and to become active members of vibrant communities, students need regular opportunities to participate in civic learning and engagement activities from preschool through college. High-quality civic learning fosters civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes; promotes civic equality; builds 21st-century and workforce skills; improves school climate; and lowers school dropout rates.(7) Young people who engage in and know more about their communities are more likely to want to improve those communities through better government, voting, political discussion, and other civic activities than their less engaged and knowledgeable counterparts.(8) These students also tend to be more interested in learning how to create change and how to make effective decisions with regards to community issues. Schools with a positive climate where students feel safe and valued tend to attract students who genuinely want to be there and who have a propensity for giving back to their community through activities that help develop civic skills and dispositions. Happy, well-adjusted students are much less likely to engage in destructive behaviors, and that benefits not only the immediate school community, but their families and the community at large.(9)

Taken together, there are Six Proven Practices for effective civic learning and engagement.(10) These evidence-based practices help students grasp a true understanding of and appreciation for how our American democracy works by allowing them to examine and participate in a holistic manner. It is not enough to teach selected pieces about how our government works. According to research presented in Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools, students gain a deeper understanding from:

1) Rich instruction in government, history, law, and democracy
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2) Discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events in the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives
3) Programs that provide students with opportunities to apply what they learn through community service, addressing the root causes of substantive issues and linked to the formal curriculum and to classroom instruction
4) Extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities
5) Meaningful participation in school governance
6) Participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures

Civic education strategies that allow students to investigate the complexities of our governmental system can equip them far more effectively to participate in that system than those that require little more of students than simply digesting key historical facts, dates, and events. Students' school years represent a pivotal time in the development of their values, attitudes, and perspectives. Young people are impacted more by their school experiences than almost any other environment they experience, so in order to cultivate well-rounded, fully engaged participants in American democracy, high-quality classroom instruction and community engagement connected to that classroom instruction must remain at the foundation of civic learning.

For each of the Six Proven Practices for effective civic learning and engagement identified above we have selected corresponding evidence-based programs that support the practices.(11) All programs identified below are evidence-based, have been successfully implemented in communities across the nation and within the Mountain West, and will be implemented with fidelity to the existing model. The eight programs listed below represent opportunities for civic learning and engagement programming across the P-20 pipeline. Some are better suited for elementary-aged students. Some are more appropriate for high school and college students. Additionally, these programs are all designed such that AmeriCorps Members are well-suited to deliver the interventions. These include:

1) Rich instruction in government, history, law, and democracy - We the People and Project Citizen
2) Discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events in the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives - Deliberating in a Democracy and Ask Big Questions
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3) Programs that provide students with opportunities to apply what they learn through community service, addressing the root causes of substantive issues and linked to the formal curriculum and to classroom instruction - Public Achievement, Earth Force, and PeaceJam
4) Extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities - PeaceJam and Earth Force
5) Meaningful participation in school governance
6) Participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures - iCivics

The following are research studies conducted on the evidence-based programs identified above. While P-20 teams will have the flexibility to design their national service interventions based on the specific needs of their students and on the practice(s) they select, all interventions will be from among this list of evidence-based programs. All programs listed below include links within the footnotes to external evaluations completed for each of the potential interventions:

1) Ask Big Questions - Ask Big Questions helps partners build stronger communities by leveraging the resources they already have: their students, faculty, and staff. They work with each partner campus or organization to identify settings and populations where reflective conversations can thrive. They then design a series of small-group reflective conversations and train students to lead them with their peers. Conversations feature an array of communication and learning modes including: personal journaling; small-group conversation; large-group interpretive discussion; exercises involving movement; and interactive activities for communal reflection.(12)
2) Deliberating in a Democracy - Deliberating in a Democracy in the Americas (DDA) is designed to promote the teaching and learning of democratic principles and the skills of civic deliberation among a new generation in the United States and in Latin America. This major initiative is conducted by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC), Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles (CRF) and Street Law, Inc. with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of Deliberating in a Democracy in the Americas is to increase the knowledge, ability and dispositions of high school teachers and their students in the United States and Latin America to effectively participate in deliberations of controversial issues related to democratic principles in their countries.(13)
3) Earth Force - Earth Force employs a six-step model that combines the best of civic engagement, environmental education, and STEM. Youth work together through educator facilitation to design
and implement a project to explore root causes and address a policy or practice related to the environmental issue that they identify in their community. Earth Force's focus on civic engagement helps learners to become active participants in their communities by conducting balanced research, building strong community partnerships, and making decisions as a democratic group.(14)

4) iCivics - iCivics exists to engage students in meaningful civic learning. iCivics provides civics teachers well-written, inventive, and free resources that enhance their practice and inspire their classrooms. Their mission is to ensure every student receives a high-quality civic education, and becomes engaged in, and beyond, the classroom.(15)

5) PeaceJam - The mission of the PeaceJam Foundation is to create young leaders committed to positive change in themselves, their communities, and the world through the inspiration of Nobel Peace Laureates who pass on the spirit, skills, and wisdom they embody. PeaceJam is an international, year-long, ongoing educational program for youth ages 5-25. The participating Nobel Peace Laureates are directly involved in developing the PeaceJam curriculum and the program itself. PeaceJam is the only organization in the world which has so many Nobel Peace Laureates working together long-term for a common cause - the leadership development of our youth.(16)

6) Project Citizen - Project Citizen is a civic education program for middle, secondary, and post-secondary students and youth or adult groups. Project Citizen promotes competent and responsible participation in state, local, and federal government. It actively engages people in learning how to monitor and influence public policy. Participants work together as a class or extracurricular group to identify and study a public policy issue. The final product is a portfolio that may be presented before other classes, groups, community organizations, or policymakers.(17)

7) Public Achievement - Public Achievement (PA) is an international, youth led, civic engagement initiative that seeks to promote student voice and transformative change for individuals and communities. Undergraduates serve as PA coaches alongside K-12 students in public schools. Together, students participate in a year-long cycle of inquiry and action around school and community based social justice issues. All participants gain insight on community leadership, the foundations of social change and the power of relationships.(18)

8) We the People - We the People promotes civic competence and responsibility among the nation's upper elementary and secondary students. The We the People printed textbook's and Enhanced book's interactive strategies, relevant content, and the simulated congressional hearing make teaching and learning exciting for both students and teachers. The program enjoys active support from state bar associations and foundations, and other educational, professional, business, and community
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organizations across the nation. Since its inception in 1987, more than 28 million students and 75,000 educators have participated in the We the People Program.(19)

During the course of the planning grant, P-20 teams will use a gap analysis tool to select the proven practices and evidence-based programs that will support their P-20 partnership. The six communities of practice included in the planning grant are: Alamosa, CO; Casper, WY; Denver, CO; Greeley, CO; Laramie, WY; Pueblo, CO. Each partnership will include a public school district, one or more higher education institutions, a liaison lead from the Collaborative, and representatives from the evidence-based program. Individuals included on each P-20 team will include: 1) P-12 CIVICS Corps liaison (school district staff), 2) higher education CIVICS Corps liaison (university/college staff), 3) representative of the Collaborative (lead organizations), 4) P-12 classroom teacher (school district), 5) higher education faculty member (university/college), and 6) at least one P-12 and higher education student representative (both school district and university/college). AmeriCorps Members will be integrated as CIVICS Corps national service participants in two ways. First, full-time CIVICS Corps Members will help to coordinate between the P-12 and higher education partners for program development and delivery. Second, part-time CIVICS Corps Members will serve as CIVICS Coaches, implementing the evidence-based programs at P-12 partner sites with P-12 students. CIVICS Corps Members will receive support and training through the Collaborative and through their P-12 host site and Member training will be a key component of the P-20 team work plans specific to program development.

Planning Process and Timeline
The planning process and timeline outlined below is part of the Collaborative's larger framework to make sustainable interventions that will positively and concretely impact the civic learning, engagement, and health of P-20 students and future leaders.

Planning Process:
It is critical for this planning process that P-20 teams work through the gap analysis process and identify the evidence-based intervention and proven practice that will most effectively address the gaps identified in the civic learning and engagement of students within the school district. The timeline below allows for three months during which the Collaborative and P-20 teams will assess local community needs and select the most appropriate intervention. Once the intervention has been
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identified, teams will then develop work plans that include consistent deliverables throughout the remaining eight months, leading up to a Civic Showcase during which they will submit final program development, training, and implementation plans to the Collaborative. These plans will include comprehensive details identifying how the intervention follows the CIVICS Corps logic model, how AmeriCorps Members will be selected and trained, how Members will be supported during their service, how Members and host sites will identify as AmeriCorps Members and sites, how sites will ensure compliance with federal and program requirements, and how they will meet all program match requirements. Throughout that time, leads from the Collaborative will meet with teams electronically and in person for technical assistance.

Timeline:
*May 2017 - Notice of funding from CNCS
*June 2017 - Resource Development: Lead Collaborative members will begin working through the Gap Analysis Tool for civic learning and engagement on a regional level (CO and WY) to provide concrete information on gaps and areas of opportunity for communities of practice; this initial analysis will serve as the starting point for P-20 teams to complete analyses within their local communities
*July 2017 - Collaborative Summer Planning Retreat: Members of the Collaborative will convene to prepare all materials, conduct outreach to each of the communities of practice, secure commitments from participating school districts and higher education institutions, and coordinate P-20 teams for the August 2017 launch
*August 2017 - Planning Grant Launch: P-20 teams will meet within their communities with Collaborative leads to identify internal timelines, submit work plans for the year to the Collaborative, and identify needed resources
*September 2017 - Civic Health Summit: P-20 teams from the six identified communities of practice will be convened during the Colorado Civic Health Summit at History Colorado in Denver; P-20 teams will identify and submit their proven practice and evidence-based intervention to the Collaborative
*October-November 2017 - Each P-20 team will host two site visits to review work plans and progress in identifying the evidence-based program to implement during the 2018-2019 academic year
*January 2018 - Submit proposal to CNCS for full AmeriCorps funding to implement the CIVICS Corps program during the 2018-2019 academic year
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*February 2018 - Civic Health Summit: P-20 teams will be convened to share their plan development for the evidence-based practice; Collaborative members will align P-20 team plans with the three-tiered assessment and evaluation process outlined within this proposal so that assessment and evaluation is included as a core component from the start, during program design.

*March-April, 2018 - Each P-20 team will host two site visits to review work plans and progress in identifying the evidence-based program to implement during the 2018-2019 academic year

*May 2018 - Civic Showcase: P-20 teams will participate in the Civic Showcase through the Civic Canopy to share their CIVICS Corps program design and implementation plan

*June 2018 - Recruitment for CIVICS Corps AmeriCorps Members and Member training

*August 2018 - CIVICS Corps program implementation, pending funding for the full proposal

Footnotes:


(9) Amrit Thapa, Jonathan Cohen, Shawn Guffy, and Ann Higgins-D’Alessandro, "A Review of
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(13) http://www.did.deliberating.org/about_us/index.html#Evaluation.


(16) http://www.peacejam.org/programs.

(17) http://www.civiced.org/resources/research/researchevaluation/pc-research.


(19) http://www.civiced.org/resources/research/researchevaluation/wtp-research.

Organizational Capability

The Collaborative works together to create strong communities by ensuring that young people have the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and opportunities to actively engage in their communities and schools as civic agents. Our vision is that all young people are actively engaged in building strong communities and contributing meaningfully to civic life both inside and outside of the classroom. The lead partners included in the Collaborative have a combined 45 years of work in civic learning and engagement and Campus Compact of the Mountain West (CCMW) staff has over 20 years of national service program management. Stephanie Schooley, Executive Director of CCMW and Program Director for this planning grant, has been the Program Director for Colorado State Commission and National Direct AmeriCorps programming, including the UCAN Serve and CSC AmeriCorps Programs, enrolling up to 4,000 higher education students per year in part-time terms of service from a seven-state region focused on Careers in the Common Good and workforce development in medically and educationally-underserved communities. Katie Kleinhesselink, Director of Member Services for CCMW, has been the Program Director for a Wyoming State Commission program covering higher education institutions across the state and is currently the Program Director for a VISTA program through CCMW focused on student Veteran access to and success in higher education. Both of these CCMW staff members and leads for the planning grant are AmeriCorps
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VISTA and AmeriCorps State & National alums.

Kelli Pfaff, Director of Civic Programs at the Civic Canopy is the lead organizer for the Collaborative and is also the Program Director for a grant funded through the Daniels Fund that focuses on K-6 civic learning and engagement. Kelli will serve as a connector between the five communities of practice currently implementing the Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning and the six higher education partnerships incorporated into the planning grant. The Civic Canopy has been a leading organization within the Mountain West for convening and implementing civic discourse and action focused on “the many working as one for the good of all” (www.civicanopy.org). The Canopy focuses in five key areas: civic engagement, early childhood, information technology projects, healthy communities, and youth engagement.

Paul Baumann, Director of the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement at Education Commission of the States is a founding partner of the Collaborative and provides a national policy perspective and expertise on proven practices for civic learning and engagement. Paul’s team at Education Commission of the States has been central to identifying and vetting the evidence-based practices included in the planning grant design and he brings national and regional expertise specific to civic learning and engagement. Paul has served on the Civic Health Network Steering Committee and has led the Collaborative for the past three years.

The leads identified above have all been integral parts of the formation and operation of the Collaborative over the past three years. Some examples of the success of the Collaborative include the writing and publishing of the Colorado Civic Health Index, hosting of twice-annual Civic Health Summits beginning in 2013, a community dialogue series focused in five diverse communities to identify civic learning and engagement opportunities and gaps in 2015, and a successfully funded civic education initiative in 2016 focused on research-based practices of civic learning that promote student civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions for K-6 students in five Colorado communities.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

This planning grant will be supported by an almost dollar-for-dollar match by the lead organizations. In addition, each lead organization will forego any indirect costs taken from the grant outside of a 5% overall charge to cover basic administrative costs. In true partnership with the proposal’s communities of practice, CCMW will pass through funding to support local program development and
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implementation planning in each of the communities. Funding for site visits will help ensure high-quality and consistent communication and person-to-person technical assistance as P-20 teams work with one another. Staffing included in the budget will serve to provide overall project coordination and communication and will keep teams and the lead organizations working to meet timelines and deliverables. Finally, the Collaborative brings to the table $100,000 in private funding from a local foundation to support the K-6 work identified within this proposal. That work is currently underway and began in August 2016. Because the Collaborative has been working together for the past three years and has been working intensively with the communities of practice for the past year, we are in a strong position to utilize resources effectively and move the planning grant forward efficiently.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

We believe that the Mountain West can serve as a national, replicable model for strong civic learning and engagement, which directly impacts the civic health of the region. To demonstrate these impacts, CCMW is engaged in three linked evaluation projects that will allow for intensive assessments of both student and community impacts. First, CCMW is partnering with Dr. Cecilia Orphan at the University of Denver for a regional initiative to create a Civic Health and Equity assessment tool (CHE matrix) for higher education institutions that mirrors the NCoC Civic Health Index. Through this tool, the Collaborative will be able to evaluate community impacts of the evidence-based interventions supported through this planning grant as well as the other P-20 civic learning and engagement efforts within the region as a critical part of communities’ civic health. The CHE matrix focuses on community impact and campus-community partnership development as necessary elements to sustain civic learning and engagement work between P-12 and higher education partners.

Second, the Collaborative is partnering with Dr. Ben Kirshner at the University of Colorado Boulder as lead evaluator to implement the Measuring Youth Policy Arguments rubric (MYP) through the Civics Measures Initiative for assessing student impact and civic learning. Dr. Kirshner is piloting the rubric with the Collaborative as part of the privately-funded K-6 initiative that will link with the CIVICS Corps. Through the MYP, the Collaborative will help classroom teachers and project participants to assess student civic learning through the evidence-based programs selected by P-20 teams that involve identification of a community challenge, research about the community challenge, identifying solutions, formulating a call to action, and ongoing reflection. The MYP was developed in consultation with the Six Proven Practices and also meets Common Core standards for classroom instruction. Dr. Kirshner is Director of the CU ENGAGE program and Associate Professor in the
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School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. In a study supported by the Spencer Foundation, Dr. Kirshner works with secondary school teachers to provide opportunities for their students to discuss, investigate, and take action to dismantle educational barriers, such as unsafe school climates or inadequate facilities. He is also a “network adviser” for the MacArthur Foundation’s Connected Learning Research Network. His publications discuss youth civic engagement and activism, participatory action research, and urban education policy.

Finally, the Collaborative is utilizing the State Civic Education Policy Gap Analysis Tool created by Education Commission of the States to identify strategic and measured steps forward toward consistent, agreed-upon, and evidence-based policies that support P-20 civic learning and engagement (Jan Brennan, “State Civic Education Policy: Gap Analysis Tool for Education Leaders and Policymakers,” Education Commission of the States, 2016). The Gap Analysis Tool will be used by P-20 teams from the six target communities to assess: 1) civic mission of education, 2) civic education standards and curricula across preschool to postsecondary, 3) integration of inquiry-based instruction, informed action, and demonstration of learning, 4) integration of civic learning across all academic disciplines, 5) pre-service teacher licensure/accreditation, 6) teacher professional development, 7) assessment of student civic learning progress, 8) civic learning accountability indicators of educator and institutional performance, and 9) measures of community impact. The Gap Analysis Tool allows the Collaborative to assess regional impact and determine if the interventions are contributing to district and community-wide improvement.

These three assessment tools and processes, taken together as a comprehensive plan for evaluation and assessment, will provide valuable information on the impact of the proposed CIVICS Corps model from the perspective of statewide/institutional policies and practice, community impact, and student impact. The Collaborative is prepared to submit a full evaluation plan with the three-year AmeriCorps grant proposal in January 2018.

Amendment Justification

Not applicable

Clarification Summary

Section B: Personnel fringe benefits are provided through the University of Denver and include unemployment insurance, disability benefits, retirement match, health insurance, ADD coverage, and
tuition benefits for the 29% rate.

Section C: Travel to CNCS-sponsored meetings - $450 x 2 = $900 (airfare for 2 staff members); $180 x 2 x 3 = $1,080 (lodging for 2 staff members x 3 nights); $10 x 2 = $20 (transportation to the airport for 2 staff members) = $2,000 total expenses

Program-related travel - The Collaborative will provide travel stipends to each of the 6 participating communities to convene in Denver for gap analysis and planning meetings. Each community team will match these travel stipends of $500 with $500 from local sources. The team from Denver will be reimbursed for mileage ($25 total) rather than the full $500 stipend ($500 x 5 + $25 = $2,525); travel to each of the participating communities will include an overnight stay for Alamosa, CO and Casper, WY ($100 x 2 x 2 = $400 for lodging for 2 staff members); the remaining $575 will be directed toward mileage reimbursement for staff site visits to Denver, Greeley, Laramie, and Pueblo = $3,500 total expenses

Section I - Both staff members listed within the budget have completed CNCS-approved background checks within the past year as part of AmeriCorps*VISTA and MLK Day of Service programs. CCMW has the National Sex Offender Registry check and state repository check documentation on file.

Section III B - The budget in eGrants has been amended to reflect a fixed percentage for indirect expenses.

Source of Funds - Match has been secured for this planning grant.

No other resolution items were requested in the grant notification and the awarded amount matched the requested amount within the proposal.

Continuation Changes

Not applicable

Grant Characteristics