

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE		1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction														
Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)																
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):	3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE: 07-JAN-11	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:														
2b. APPLICATION ID: 11AC122432	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 10ACHAK0010002														
5. APPLICATION INFORMATION																
LEGAL NAME: Nine Star Enterprises, Inc. DUNS NUMBER: 784090839	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Ruth Schoenleben TELEPHONE NUMBER: (907) 279-7827 FAX NUMBER: (907) 279-3299 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: ruths@ninestar.com															
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 125 West Fifth Avenue Anchorage AK 99501 - 2521 County: Dillingham (CA)																
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 920069154	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit 7b. Community-Based Organization Local Education Agency															
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):	9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: Corporation for National and Community Service															
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State	11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: Learn and Earn Alaska															
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Members joining the Learn and Earn Project (Education and Employment Services) will be primarily assigned to assist under- and unemployed Alaskan youth and adult in the more urban communities of Anchorage, Eagle River, Wasilla, Palmer, & Fair	11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):															
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 01/01/12 END DATE: 12/31/12	14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="AK 001"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="AK 001"/>															
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <input type="text" value="2"/>	16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">a. FEDERAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 481,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b. APPLICANT</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 325,068.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. STATE</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d. LOCAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e. OTHER</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f. PROGRAM INCOME</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>g. TOTAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 806,068.00</td> </tr> </table>	a. FEDERAL	\$ 481,000.00	b. APPLICANT	\$ 325,068.00	c. STATE	\$ 0.00	d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00	e. OTHER	\$ 0.00	f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00	g. TOTAL	\$ 806,068.00	17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	
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18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.																
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Ruth Schoenleben	b. TITLE: VP/AmeriCorps Director	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (907) 279-7827														
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 05/03/11														

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Executive Summary

RATIONAL AND APPROACH: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nine Star Education and Employment Services is a local, statewide, and national leader in the area of Education and Employment services to under- and unemployed Alaskans. With their key partners they serve a large population of ex-offenders, provide 100% of the adult and literacy education in Anchorage, 100% of the service to clients on temporary assistance (welfare), 100% of the senior employment placements, 90% of the youth employment placements, and its high school program is the sixth largest (in student numbers) in a city of 300,000 people. The nature of the project is with Nine Star as an intermediary for the express purpose of community resource sharing and wrap around services. Its design provides under- and unemployed Alaskans with access to many community resources and services as well as centralized case management, job placement, and follow-up.

Rationale and Approach

RATIONALE & APPROACH

A. COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEED

According to the November 2009 Department of Labor statistics, Alaska has an all-time high of 8.7% unemployment. The US Census Bureau estimates 9.8% of Alaskans are under the poverty level and an estimated 14.3% of Alaska's population speak a language other than English in their homes. The Anchorage Daily News (11/19/08) reported that Alaska's dropout rate is double the national average. Anchorage School District reports the dropout rate for Alaska Natives nears 60%, and the dropout rate overall is above 33%. In 2008, the Department of Corrections oversaw 5,813 individuals who were on probation--most needing gainful employment and/or an increase in their education levels.

In 2009, the Alaska Center for Public Policy, the Economic Policy Institute and the U.S. Bureau of Labor

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Statistics and Census Bureau published the following "Alaska's unemployment rate in 2009 jumped from an average of 6.8% in 2008 to 8.1% in May...The Alaska regional unemployment rate varies a lot...Seventeen out of twenty-seven boroughs and census areas were between 10% and 25% unemployment rate in April 2009. In order to afford a basic Anchorage family budget for a two-member family (one parent, one child) with one earner, the parent needs to earn at least \$18.28 per hour (2.5 times the minimum wage)." This, however, is not the norm.

ProLiteracy, the world's largest organization of adult literacy and basic education programs, represents adults whose reading, writing and math skills are at the lowest levels, a population that is over-represented among the unemployed. They submit that "the relationship between the level of education and poverty is clear." Their goals are the same as Nine Star's Learn & Earn Alaska AmeriCorps Project--to get the people they represent and serve to work. (<http://proliteracy.org>)

*Note that for purposes of this proposal, "community" is geographical (Anchorage, Mt. View neighborhood, Fairbanks, etc.) unless specified as the disabilities community, at-risk community, etc.

Nine Star and its AmeriCorps partner agencies understand the apparent correlation between education and employment. The Learn & Earn Alaska Project is designed to advance the quality of life for Alaskans through improved education/literacy skills and greater employment opportunities. How do you move a family from the public assistance rolls to financial self-sufficiency? How do you keep an ex-offender from re-offending? How do you help a young adult complete their high school education and find work that gives them financial independence? And how do you prepare a refugee or an abused wife for the world of work? The obvious answer is INSTRUCTION--instruction that leads to entry level employment

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and eventual higher-quality employment.

Nine Star did not select education and employment as the focus of this AmeriCorps project--the organization's very nature IS education and employment services. Its partners are educators and employment specialists who work with under- and unemployed Alaskans. The "need" brought about the very creation of the organizations involved in this project--Nine Star, Covenant House, Alaska Native Justice Center, Alaska Literacy Project, etc. The AmeriCorps project design says, "let's enhance the current services of the literacy and employment agencies in Alaska." Host agencies do not design their programs around AmeriCorps service, but they integrate Member service into their existing programs to strengthen them and increase the success of their participants.

Besides the statistics noted above, how do we know "Learn" services are needed? The Alaska Department of Education database reflects the full time adult education student enrollment of Nine Star at 1824, the Department of Corrections at 884, Fairbanks literacy projects at 761, Juneau at 474, and the MatSu borough at 416--these are GED, basic skills, and English as a second language students. High school dropout enrollment reached 340 at Nine Star and in addition, 106 youth were placed in education programs to prepare for work with 124 credentials earned. Computer instruction was provided to 389 Alaskans at Nine Star (public assistance clients, ex-offenders, at-risk youth, etc.)

Besides the statistics noted above, how do we know "Earn" services are needed? The State DOL data base says 215 low income seniors were enrolled in Anchorage's Senior Employment program. The most recent report for the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services states 3,109 families receive monthly financial support from the State of Alaska.

Furthermore, the very nature of the grants given to Nine Star and its Learn & Earn partners by the State

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of Alaska declares the need for these services. The Department of Labor Division of Public Assistance Work Services contract, Alaska Department of Education Adult Basic Education Program, Department of Corrections GED and work readiness grants, Business Partnerships youth grants, and the Senior Employment program all seek out agencies to do the work of education and employment for Alaska's under- and unemployed. Funding for these services is limited and AmeriCorps Members do not staff the programs, but rather augment the course design of all these projects for greater success as clients seek financial self-sufficiency.

B. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND MEMBER ROLES

Low income Alaskans need to know how to get a job, keep their job, and advance in their employment. The project focuses on addressing the needs described above--reduction of poverty and the re-entry of offenders in their community and family systems. They need GEDs and diplomas; computer skills and skills for the "trades"; improved English and math skills; and they need job readiness coaching and work experience. The purpose of the Learn & Earn Alaska AmeriCorps project is to assist under and unemployed Alaskans in improving their quality of life through improved education, gainful employment, and enhanced employment.

The BROAD STROKE MISSION focuses Member support for the following populations:

At-Risk Youth

Public Assistance Recipients

Dropouts

Ex-Offenders (youth & adults)

Alaska Natives

Refugees

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Alaskans Whose First Language is not English

Youth & Adults with Disabilities

Low Income Senior Citizens

Low-Income and Unemployed Youth & Adults (including the homeless)

Residents of Low Income Neighborhoods targeted for Revitalization

True to the mission of the Learn & Earn Alaska project, the project partners provide services which support the under- and unemployed as they prepare for meaningful employment which will lead to an improved quality of life:

*NINE STAR EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Affords a system of integrated services in the areas of education (GEDs, HS diplomas, Math for the Trades instruction, English as a Second language classes, homework support and computer instruction) and employment (youth work experience, senior employment, work readiness classes, job search, etc.)

*ALASKA NATIVE JUSTICE CENTER

Ready ex-offenders with pre- and post release employment services; resource referrals, life skills, and family re-unification

*CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

Provide resource referrals and direct services for refugees needing housing and work in the Anchorage area

*COVENANT HOUSE

Homeless youth receive job readiness training, GED services, and housing

*DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROBATION AND PAROLE

Prepare offenders for the world of work with case management, resource referrals, pre-employment skills training, and work training

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*ANCHORAGE JAIL/MCLAUGHLIN YOUTH CENTER/HIGHLAND MOUNTAIN CORRECTIONAL CENTER

Provide GED instruction, computer skills training, & pre-employment skills development to inmates awaiting trial and/or sentencing

*ABUSED WOMEN'S AID IN CRISIS

Make available housing, life skills instruction, pre-employment services, and resource referrals to abused women

*ALASKA YOUTH & FAMILY NETWORK

Assist youth who experience mental/emotional disabilities (and their families) prepare for independent living and financial independence through work

*BRIDGE BUILDERS

Support community education that increases access to community resources for minority populations and thus enhances their ability to improve their quality of life

*ALASKA LITERACY PROGRAM ANCHORAGE

Give instruction in family, adult, and computer literacy

*ADULT LEARNING PROGRAMS OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

Provide GED and computer instruction and guide seniors in employment endeavors

*LITERACY COUNCIL OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

Provide family, adult and computer literacy, as well as book recycling

*IONIA

Educates and models a fundamental change in an approach to healthy mental, physical and community life

*KASILOF ALASKA PEER SUPPORT CONSORTIUM

Trains providers who serve those with mental health concerns to prepare for a higher level of work and life self-sufficiency

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*LOVE, INC.

Navigates low income Alaskans through the world of support services while generating new donors and providers of community resources

*NEW HORIZON'S TRANSITION HOME

Offers a transitional living environment for ex-offenders as they navigate post-incarceration community re-entry

*SITKA ADULT ED PROGRAM

Gives instruction in adult education and GED preparation

How does Member service fit in with the programs listed above? First of all, all the entities listed as host agencies have limited resources within their own walls. Whenever possible, these agencies "share" clients in either a referral sense or a mutual case management system.

Another way that Members support existing programs is by shoring up or lending value added services to an existing program design. For example, a typical case load for a work service specialist (case manager) is often 60-90 families. It is impossible for these hard working staff members to provide all the resources for their families that would help them leave the public assistance rolls. Therefore, AmeriCorps Members man computer labs for public assistance recipients, at-risk youth, ex-offenders, and homeless individuals and make available job readiness services (resume development, interviewing skills, job search support, etc.) and computer skills development instruction. The recipients of these services get micro-soft computer certification or jobs or pay increases at work.

Other case management support comes in the form of intake and resource referrals. Helping an Alaskan gain an improved quality of life is the goal of every Member who serves in the Learn & Earn Alaska project and they often walk a client through the time-consuming ropes of obtaining needed resources.

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GED programs are funded by the State in a limited fashion. Classroom instruction is supported by Members who provide assessment, practice testing, support to on-line students, encouragement to students falling off in their classroom attendance. These Members often encourage students to visit the computer and career development labs along with their GED instruction so they are ready for work when they obtain their GED.

In the realm of the Department of Corrections, probation officers, for example, must enforce the "get a job" mentality, but do not have the time or tools to help a recently released offender find that all important job. Members are skilled in such activities and support an ex-felon in their re-entry journey.

Because of the community minded thinking of Members, integrated services are becoming expected and normal instead of unusual and out of the ordinary. This is most easily accomplished in the Anchorage area. When a probation officer refers someone to Nine Star, they will be assigned to a Member whose expertise is in ex-offender issues and community resources. They may be served in house at Nine Star or followed by the Member who serves in a case manager role while they are in the community obtaining other services. A mom on public assistance might be referred to a women's shelter for clothes while her teenager is re-enrolling in a diploma completion program. A homeless teen will most likely be served by Nine Star, Covenant House, and Love, Inc. Wrap around--integrated services support more accomplishments for under- and unemployed Alaskans.

Services are focused on EDUCATION that leads to EMPLOYMENT or career advancement:

High School Completion

Math for the Trades

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General Education Diploma (GED) Preparation & Testing

Homework Clubs

Work Readiness for Youth with Disabilities

Computer Instruction

Youth Engagement in Community Activities

Instructional Support for Students Whose First Language is not English

Family Literacy

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Work Readiness Skills

Apprenticeships and other "Trades" work experiences

Members serve as:

Assessors (Education & Employment)

Job Coaches/Career Guides

Basic Skills Educators in the classroom and on-line

High School Completion Coaches

GED Testers

ESL Teachers

Even Start & Family Literacy Providers

Computer Trainers & MOS® Testing

Homework Support

Case Managers

Life Skills Coaches

Literacy Promoters

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Volunteer Recruiters

In Sitka & Soldotna--two rural communities--the adult basic education programs for drop outs is connected to the local University of Alaska branches, in hopes that not only will students receive their GEDs, but they will continue on in their educational pursuits and enroll in trades classes and degree programs.

In Fairbanks project partners provide literacy services to low level readers and provide literacy materials to outlying rural communities. They are a rural "hub" for literacy services and distant learning. Job training is also part of the services at the Learning Center. Learn & Earn works in Fairbanks as well as Anchorage.

The training and recruitment of Members is more thoroughly discussed in the Member Outputs and Outcomes section, but note is made here that some Members are recruited "ready to go" and others come from the "at-risk" population of individuals seeking an AmeriCorps experience. Their expertise and areas of interest guide site and program placement. ALL Members receive a generic orientation to AmeriCorps, training on-site, and on-going professional development which will strengthen or build their skills as it applies to their specific assignment. Special care is taken to ensure that Members understand AmeriCorps guidelines and the working policies and procedures of their program/agency.

The strategy for placement of full time and part time Members is based primarily on agency need. However, since this project is recruiting Members from the "at-risk" community as well as the "equipped" population, there is the need for flexibility for some Members. Often students or senior "recruits" are anxious for part-time slots to accommodate classes or travel. Members with disabilities or previous health issues are also candidates for part-time slots. Members placed at sites connected to the

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University or educational systems often prefer a 9 month Member versus a 12 month Member. Career centers see more clients in the morning than the afternoon and need additional staffing for the early hours of the day. Though there is a tentative plan for the placement of the 50 FT and PT Members in this project and a tentative commitment from current host sites, the final placement of Members will be determined based on agency and Member needs in 2011 when this project begins. Nine Star expects to keep 25 Members at its sites and share 25 slots with partner agencies.

CFR 2540.100 Requirements: Note that as part of sustainability and capacity building, AmeriCorps Members at Nine Star or partner agencies do not replace employees or community volunteers, but rather complement and enhance program services available to clients. Members are all tasked with recruiting volunteers for their project and the community as a whole. Partner agencies are trained to understand before they become an official AmeriCorps site that a Member cannot replace staff who have left their employment. Program managers both at Nine Star and at partner sites are made aware of this regulation through an initial, and subsequent, in-person training sessions. All the services Members who serve in these "learning & earning" agencies are an enhancement to the services already in existence. They strengthen the individual agencies and the community as a whole when they work in harmony with each other.

C. MEASURABLE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

The aligned performance measure named "Job Placements for Ex-Offenders" is an example of how outputs, intermediate outcomes, and the end outcomes define the progress individuals make when they participate in the wrap around services provided by Members in the Learn & Earn Alaska AmeriCorps Project who serve at multiple agencies.

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*Phase I--Looking at Outputs: How many community members will be served?

850 Offenders nearing release from incarceration, half-way house residents, and ex-offenders out of incarceration will be served by 10 AmeriCorps Members in areas of case management, job readiness skills development, resource referrals, and life skills support.

*Phase II--Looking at Intermediate Outcomes: What steps will the client take to reach their ultimate goal and what smaller steps will be accomplished?

250 Ex-offenders needing employment, but lacking in readiness for the workplace will receive job readiness skills or be enrolled in computer instruction or trades apprenticeships, classes, or on-the-job training.

*Phase III--Looking at End Outcomes: What is the event that will help the client know they are on the path to a healthy life and long term financial self-sufficiency?

70 ex-offenders will gain employment and begin a career path toward financial self-sufficiency.

Outputs and outcomes are the features necessary for all the phases of this project where learning and earning bring the individuals and the community as a whole to a healthier place socially and economically. For example the ex-offender receives initial re-entry services (output); they move on to a training activity to prepare for work (intermediate outcome); they get a job (end outcome); and the ex-offender does not reoffend or return to prison (this would be an ultimate future outcome).

Though the adult education and literacy performance measure is not an "aligned" performance measure,

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the principal is the same for those enrolled in literacy activities. Students enroll in classes (output); students improve their math skills which helps them get a better job or a job in the trades (intermediate outcome); and the student obtains a GED or high school diploma (end outcome); and prepares for more education or improved employment (this would be an ultimate future outcome).

The activities of a client/student is tracked by Members and agency personnel on paper and entered into appropriate data bases. Project staff receive monthly reports, aggregate the data, and report to the Serve Alaska Commission on the project's performance measures. Data that reflects additional and extensive outputs and outcomes, but not recorded in the egrants performance measure system, will also be tracked, aggregated, and shared with the State Commission, granting agencies, and partner entities so the full scope of the work of Members can be captured on paper and used to prove the effectiveness of Member service.

In the strategic plan of the Corporation for National and Community Service is a focus on "Ensuring a Brighter Future for All of America's Youth." A big part of Nine Star's Learn & Earn Alaska Project focuses on the education and economic opportunities for Alaska's youth population. It is expected that over 600 youth (primarily ages 16-24) will be served in this project. And in the spirit of this project, young people receive wrap around services at several Anchorage partner sites and in the rural communities where Members serve. The areas of service include:

Obtaining GED/High School diplomas

Homework support (ages 6-18)

Completing nationally recognized work certifications,

Life skills instruction and support for youth with disabilities

Job readiness instruction (resume writing, interviewing skills, job search, etc.)

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Career exploration

Work experience placements

Joining the workforce--getting a paid job

Educational planning

Re-entry support for youth leaving incarceration

Family Literacy (ages 2-99)

Cultural diversity support

Housing

Referrals to community resources/agencies

Supporting the Learn & Earn Alaska efforts is the supporting agencies of Anchorage United for Youth and the Anchorage Youth Development Coalition. Host partners in this project are involved with these groups and gain support from them. This in turn supports successful Member service.

In alignment with Serve Alaska's strategic goals and the Corporation's strategic focus is a performance measure regarding volunteer generation--150 community volunteers will be engaged in support education and employment activities locally and statewide. This performance measure is reported on in the current Learn & Earn grant. Most of the key partners in the project have internal processes for the generation and tracking of volunteers and their activities. Monthly reporting to the project coordinator on their volunteer recruitment and activities is already a process in place for Members and their host agencies. These figures are recorded monthly in Nine Star's AmeriCorps data tracking system. Volunteer recognition is encouraged by project staff, but left to each agency and their Members as they work within the culture of the partner agency.

In alignment with the state's Serve Alaska Commission, one of Nine Star's named performance measures

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in this project (Recruiting At-Risk Alaskans and Members with Disabilities) is the recruitment of Members from the disabilities community, but also the at-risk community. The culture of Nine Star and its partners is to not only enroll Members with extensive education and employment skills expertise, but to enroll Members from the ranks of those served. Though a few at-risk Members have not completed their term successfully, overall, this has been a very successful strategy in past projects. Many of the Members have served two terms and many have been gone on to successful employment and/or been hired by the agency where they served. Thirty percent of the Members of the Learn & Earn Alaska project will be recruited for service from the disability community and the at-risk population served by this grant.

D. PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Nine Star's PLAN and regular practice for continuous improvement comes from:

- * Insight from program managers who meet monthly
- * Regular meetings of the executive managers
- * Input from granting program managers
- * Annual staff surveys
- * Quarterly board oversight
- * Annual board/manager organizational assessment

The process of improvement and the gathering of information is formal and informal. It is intentional and accidental. It is annual and ongoing. Discussions around shared program resources, cost analysis of space and expenditures, and potential funding sources must be on-going for not only Nine Star's success, but the success of this integrated AmeriCorps project and wrap around client service. Nine Star

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managers also seek the insight of partners who work side by side with staff and Members to serve clients efficiently and effectively.

When strengths are identified, they are shared with partner staff, supervisors, and Members to encourage the continuation of best practices. They are also shared with partner agencies who might benefit from information on best practices by other agencies. When weaknesses are noted, discussions are one-on-one with project staff, agency staff, and/or Members as appropriate. Strategies are sought and implemented to improve project design and client service. Follow up is key in this area.

E. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Anchorage Community Assessment says, "The Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland tells Alice that if she doesn't know where she's going, then it doesn't matter which way she goes. Anchorage residents know the direction our city should go. The community of our dreams is safe, healthy, compassionate, and no one is in need. We strive for a city where families are self-sufficient and self-reliant, neighborhoods are vibrant, helping families thrive rather than pulling them down; and no one goes hungry, suffers violence and abuse, or faces a night without shelter or medicine. The Anchorage Community Assessment Project is a tool we can all use to chart our progress in reaching that city of our dreams. Regular community assessment keeps our finger on the pulse of Anchorage. It allows us to actively listen and engage the community on the issues that matter most, watch the trends on significant community indicators, and track our community's well-being."

The Anchorage Community and the State of Alaska are very strongly engaged in activities which led to the identification of needs addressed by the Learn & Earn Alaska project. Nine Star managers and the staff of most of its AmeriCorps site partners have been actively involved for the past couple years in

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responding to the needs outlined by the Departments of Education and Labor and in developing and implementing the Anchorage Community Plan. Out of this involvement has come increased services to at-risk youth, the under- and unemployed, and ex-offenders.

The need for Member service in the world of literacy and work has also been ratified by the Alaska State Departments of Education, Corrections, Labor, and Health and Social Services in their reports on service to undereducated, underemployed Alaskans. Along with the Anchorage School District, the University of Alaska, and community councils where AmeriCorps members serve, the community support for Member service is at an all time high. The high performance, "go-to-work" demands in welfare to work and the state's Workforce Investment Act programs have been met due to Member service in recent years.

Another group involved in the design of this project is the Alaska Coalition for Prisoner Re-Entry which has over 70 active partners--faith entities, community organizations, government agencies, tribal entities, business managers, and individuals--who came together to discuss the re-entry needs for ex-offenders. This group meets quarterly and provides much input for the design of this project. This work would be virtually non-existent without the service provided by Members.

Members displayed amazing success in serving formerly incarcerated youth and adults as shown by the staggering placement rate of men and women recently released from incarceration or still residing in half-way houses--33% are placed within 30 days of entering Nine Star's Career Development Center. Judges and staff in Anchorage's Wellness Court along with a coalition of women judges talk with Members on a regular basis with referrals, employer leads, and other suggestions that would enhance the success of ex-offenders going to work. Community leaders along with high ranking staff in the Department of Corrections are not only involved in designing processes for youth and adult felons, but

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they recognize Member service is the reason there is such great success. These leaders are community stakeholders who know that AmeriCorps Members yield results far beyond the cost invested in maintaining them as Members. The service is strongly supported not only by coalition partners--of which the DOC belongs--but also by the Governor and the Lt. Governor.

The Anchorage School District, Alaska's business community, faith and community entities, and government leaders from the city and state all contribute in different ways to the design and function of the Learn & Earn Project. No segment of the community needs to be aloof from the services AmeriCorps Members bring to the community. Those in need of education and employment assistance receive services. Input is sought from involved citizens and placed into programmatic design wherever the suggestions are not in conflict with AmeriCorps Rules & Provisions. This is a Community Project and Alaskans recognize its worth to its residents. This has been, and will continue to be, an on-going process throughout the entire three years of the Learn & Earn Alaska Project.

Keeping partners engaged in the Learn & Earn collaboration is a relatively straightforward process. Their on-going involvement comes from referrals, employment leads, declaration of community need, and financial support. Project staff actively engage in community work with most of the site hosts and interact on many levels above and beyond the direct AmeriCorps work. Member service "sells itself" in the community and there is community-wide acknowledgement for the work done by Members.

F. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

There are many facets of community service sponsored by the Corporation that have programs in Alaska. Each have their own roles and provide unique services to Alaskans. None of the activities are duplicated by other programs, but often complement each other. There is a broad array of services in

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Alaska provided by community service program members. When Nine Star receives a request for a Member that would better be served through a VISTA position or another AmeriCorps program as an example, an appropriate referral is made.

Nine Star is extremely fortunate to work with a State Commission and other Alaskan CNCS AmeriCorps grantees that meet regularly to share best practices, strategize about implementing State priorities, and look at ways to make each other's programs stronger. Program staff attend each other's events when possible and support each other's success in as many ways as possible. There is a clear recognition that we are "competitors" in some sense during the grant competition process, but the grantees are always in each other's corners.

Recently, two new grantees received State formula money to begin new programs. The "established" Alaskan programs shared handbooks and best practices to assist these new projects so they could smoothly transition into the world of AmeriCorps service. Friendships have been forged and emerging AmeriCorps personnel have been welcomed into the "inner circle" of grantee leaders. Program directors recognize that much of this camaraderie would not be possible without the affirming attitudes and quality leadership of the Serve Alaska State Commission and its competent and benevolent staff.

G. POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

Nine Star's AmeriCorps Project is a first-rate model of program integration and community resource sharing with its wrap-around service delivery design. One high level leader at the Corporation once said, "You should take this show on the road." Locally, we share the principals used in this project with other entities connected to the project. We model cooperative client service and participate actively in sharing clients with multiple agencies to utilize community resources in a cost-effective manner. Nationally and

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statewide, these principals are shared with other adult education programs. Practitioners are encouraged to integrate service to clients by looking beyond their adult education services and connecting clients with work readiness and job skills development. Nine Star has received national and local recognition for this best practice of integration of community services. This project can easily be replicated and Nine Star is always looking for ways to share the holistic, resource saving best practices with others.

Organizational Capability

D) ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

SOUND STRUCTURE

Nine Star Education and Employment Services is a local, statewide, and national leader in the area of Education and Employment services to the under- and unemployed as well as educators and executives. With their key partners they provide 100% of the adult and literacy education in Anchorage, 100% of the service to clients on temporary assistance (welfare), 100% of the senior employment placements, 90% of the youth employment placements, and its high school program is the sixth largest (in student numbers) in a city of 300,000 people. The intended Learn & Earn Alaska Project is a refined, and combined, update of the Learn and Earn and CPR (Coalition for Prisoner Re-entry) AmeriCorps grants it currently manages. The nature of the project is with Nine Star as an intermediary for the express purpose of community resource sharing and wrap around services. Its design provides under- and unemployed Alaskans with access to many community resources and services as well as centralized case management, job placement, and follow-up.

Nine Star Education & Employment Services is a state-chartered, private, non-profit organization with a community service orientation. Since its founding in 1976, Nine Star has provided literacy and work readiness services to over fifty communities in Alaska including Anchorage and many "bush" villages.

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On the front lines of client service or in the board rooms of corporations, "we develop Alaska's workforce." In addition to its funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service, Nine Star seeks and receives grant and contract awards as a service provider in areas of youth services, education, training, employment, and case management from Alaska's Departments of Education, Health & Social Services, Corrections, and Labor and Workforce Development as well as the Division of Public Assistance and the Division of Vocational Resources.

SOUND PROGRAMMATIC OVERSIGHT

Nine Star programs are all designed to help Alaskans "get a job, keep a job, and advance on the job." There is a clear understanding of how to integrate literacy and employment training to prepare people for work while making the best of programmatic resources. Nine Star leads the state in programmatic success:

*Welfare to Work Services

Over 1200 public assistance families per month are served at Nine Star. Almost 3,000 unemployed Alaskans accessed its Career Development Labs (manned almost exclusively by AmeriCorps Members) for job search support--of which 1,872 were ex-offenders-- and 1,247 families left the public assistance rolls.

*Senior Employment

The outcomes of this grant tout the highest retention rate in the state for senior Alaskans who attain unsubsidized employment. 215 seniors received computer training; 57,540 hours of unsubsidized training and community service came out of this program; and 13,620 instructional hours provided seniors with computer and work readiness skills. Two employees and four AmeriCorps Members run

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this program for under and un-employed senior Alaskans. AmeriCorps It is the only senior , computer training program of its kind in Alaska thanks to Member service. In addition to work skills development, program staff traditionally recruit AmeriCorps Members from this population who go on to unsubsidized employment after their service.

*Youth Education & Employment Services

Nine Star leads the state in youth service employment outcomes for at-risk youth. There were 414 enrolled, 282 obtained unsubsidized employment, 106 entered formal educational courses, and 124 received a nationally recognized credential. In addition, 340 students enrolled in the High School Completion program and 322 youth gained a GED or HS diploma.

*Adult Education

Nine Star leads the state in adult education student enrollment (1975 students), GED graduates (330), and 91 % of the students who start the testing process obtain their diploma. Nine Star also coordinates adult education services with the Anchorage Regional Adult Education Consortium.

OVERSEEING SERVICE SITES

Members in this project serve at different sites and in a variety of capacities. Host entities are indoctrinated in the ways of AmeriCorps and cash and in-kind match responsibilities are part of the discussion up front before a site agreement is signed. The project coordinator provides a CD with materials regarding AmeriCorps service and works with supervisors to create position descriptions that are appropriate for the Learn& Earn Alaska project. If there are disciplinary issues or programmatic concerns, the project coordinator and/or the director intervene when appropriate. The project coordinator contacts Members and supervisors at least monthly and more often as necessary. At the current time, we are not recruiting host sites, but are sharing Members with entities who are currently

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hosting members. Periodically, an agency contacts the Serve Alaska Commission staff wanting an AmeriCorps Member to serve with them. As fitting, they are often referred to Nine Star. Should an organization or agency wish to join this partnership and become a host a site, the agency is screened to see if they are suitable for the project and whether their needs match the Performance Measures of the grant. If appropriate, and possible, a Member is placed at the new host site during the next enrollment period.

Despite the diversity of agencies and the variety of roles Members play, all Anchorage Members attend monthly meetings to encourage the esprit de corps. This is part of the way in which project staff support and oversee Member service. To support those Members serving outside Anchorage more effectively, they are connected with other Vista and AmeriCorps Members in their communities whenever possible.

SOUND FISCAL OVERSIGHT

Nine Star's Chief Financial Officer has been with Nine Star for 12 years and provides the oversight to all of Nine Star's financial activities. Her work is aided by sophisticated fiscal systems in conjunction with a top-of-the-line computer network and an integrated management database system which allows for almost instantaneous analysis of project performance and progress. The integrated database and networks are maintain by Nine Star's technical staff and its Manager who has also been with Nine Star for 12 years.

Nine Star contracts with Alaska Accounting Solutions (AAS) for its fund management. The accrual accounting method used by AAS meets or exceeds the standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants for AP-133 audits and the State of Alaska Grant Management System. AAS prepares the monthly financial report and the quarterly Financial Status Reports. The Chart of Accounts is set up according to the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development Codes. Each account

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receives a separate number and expenses and reimbursements for these contracts are recorded separately. Nine Star's Board of Directors employs the CPA firm of Mikunda, Cottrell, the firm with the largest number of Alaskan education audits for schools and non-profit education, to conduct fiscal and programmatic audits that comply with federal AP-133 standards. Because Nine Star's accounting practices are sound, there has never been an audit exception in its over 33 years of operation. Additionally, in keeping with sound business practice, Nine Star maintains full liability insurance for its organization and staff.

ROLES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STAFF

All staff, including managers and AmeriCorps Members, have a position description which is reviewed and signed bi-annually. There is a clearly defined chain of command outlined in the staff manual which is required reading by all new employees and AmeriCorps Members. Nine Star's education programs are overseen by Nine Star's founder, Dr. David S. Alexander, PhD. His leadership and expertise in adult education makes him sought after nationally and statewide. Arva Carlson has been with Nine Star is Nine Star's education manager and has been at Nine Star ten years. She is a teacher, principal, and computer expert who earned a Master's Degree in Administration and Education. She is also a recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. Nine Star's Employment Programs are overseen by Leslie Vines has been with Nine Star's employment programs for nine years. She has a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management. Members work side by side with staff who are certified teachers, social workers, and/or have many years experience in the fields of education, employment, and criminology.

The AmeriCorps Director has been with Nine Star for 20 years and also serves as Nine Star's vice president. She participates in, and leads, community working groups focused on city-wide environmental and systemic change in the arena of human services. Much of this work guides the design

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and implementation of the Learn & Earn Alaska Project. She oversees the broad strokes of the project, "markets" AmeriCorps service throughout the community, shares in the CNCS reporting tasks, works with site partners, engages in Member training and provides expertise to Members to be used in program implementation.

The Project Coordinator and Project Assistant recruit Members, manage files, work with site supervisors, support Members' success in a multitude of ways, track reporting data, and lead training meetings and activities. Site Supervisors oversee Member activities on a day to day basis and report match and success stories to the project coordinator. Nine Star's supervisors meet monthly and discuss best practices regarding Member service. The infrastructure is in place to support Members and achieve performance measures project wide.

Nine Star's board of directors consists of a chair, a treasurer, a secretary and five other members. These individuals bring expertise from the business community, government service, educational endeavors, and life in various communities throughout Alaska. The board and staff represent a wide range of cultural, educational, business, and economic perspectives. They do strategic planning and broad stroke planning. They are not active in the day to day operation of Nine Star, but their finance committee meets electronically several times a year to discuss financial topics.

The organizational structure of Nine Star is very "democratic" in nature as it relates to the importance of everyone in the organization. Everyone has a voice that is valued and a stage from which they can express their ideas about program services and structure. There is also a standard "hierarchy" in place for the purpose of order and accountability. The Board oversees the direction of the organization. The Executive Managers (the president, the vice president, and the chief financial officer) oversee budgets, program performance, staff hiring, etc. Along with other leaders, they are involved in community work

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with partners and coalition folks. Program Managers and Directors work side by side with line staff to guide day-to-day program operations, client service, computer systems, data gathering, and performance outcomes.

PLAN FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Nine Star's practice of continuous improvement for the organization is parallel to the continuous improvement process of the AmeriCorps program itself. (See Rationale and Approach) In addition to that process, Nine Star has quarterly and annual program monitoring that guides much of its best practices improvement. Staff have bi-annual programmatic retreats look at performance and client service. Annual staff surveys and regular meeting with supervisors and program directors/managers guides on-going self-assessment and annually they identify goals to be presented to the Board of Directors for approval. Nine Star's board meets quarterly and also does an assessment of where Nine Star is and where they are going. A strategic planning retreat is scheduled in February for the structuring of future organizational goals.

CAPACITY TO PROVIDE AND SECURE EFFECTIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Since its inception 33 years ago, Nine Star has provided technical assistance and training to other non-profits, government agencies, and the business community. This assistance has taken the form of grant oversight and evaluation, the designing of educational and work place curriculum, organizational staff development, strategic planning, and the creation and support of statewide and local coalitions. Since 1995, AmeriCorps programs have been part of its DNA. The expertise to assist partner sites with AmeriCorps issues as well as education and employment technical support is in place. Training sessions are provided for new site supervisors and as needed for "veteran" supervisors. In addition, Nine Star's extensive community/coalition partnerships, connections, and excellent relationship with the Serve Alaska State Commission means securing technical assistance for Nine Star project staff and partners is

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just an "ask" away if the need arises.

SOUND RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS AN ORGANIZATION

SUPPORT OF DIVERSE VOLUNTEERS WHO INCREASE CAPACITY

Nine Star's volunteer generation is not only for Nine Star specifically, but for partner agencies. Members also recruit volunteers to assist where they spend their "extra" community volunteer time. Last year Members reported 513 volunteers recruited for one-time events and on-going volunteer projects. For volunteers serving at Nine Star sites, training is provided to bring them into step with Nine Star's education and employment policies, procedures, and practices. Also, volunteers who serve more than for a one-time event are asked to read Nine Star's Staff Manual so they are familiar with workplace policies and practices. Department leads provide volunteers with specific programmatic training as appropriate.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Nine Star set in motion the creation of the Alaska Coalition for Prisoner Re-entry and the Regional Adult Education Consortium. Its managers serve on many community boards, coalitions, and commissions--too many to name in this proposal. The Community Partnerships for Adult Learning (C-PAL) initiative, Office of Adult Vocational Education, US Department of Education, recognized Nine Star as one of twelve US adult literacy programs demonstrating qualities of successful community partnerships. In addition, Nine Star has been recognized locally, statewide, and nationally for its effective community service and coalition building efforts--including the AmeriCorps sponsored Innovations in Civic Partnership Award, the President's Award for Forwarding the Cause of Adult Education, the Anchorage Mayor's Diversity Award, and State of Alaska Workforce Investment Board for Exemplary Service to Youth--to name a few. As a result of its work with the Juvenile Justice Working Group and the Anchorage School District, Nine Star now houses an expulsion program in partnership with McLaughlin juvenile correctional facility and the Anchorage School District to ready students expelled from school

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for re-entry into the local high schools. Nine Star leads community entities in many cooperative, education and employment endeavors to provide more opportunities for community members to improve their quality of life.

SECURING MATCH RESOURCES FOR PAST AMERICORPS GRANTS

Nine Star has always met and exceeded its expected match requirements for its AmeriCorps grants and follows the guidelines outlined by the Corporation regarding in-kind and cash match. Match is received monthly from partner agencies and documented for monitoring purposes. Because the AmeriCorps partner agencies have worked so well in this integrated service arena, match is no longer the struggle it was in earlier days. Partners understand their role in the AmeriCorps granting process and their need to be a part of larger service to the community. They now share vital documentation for the match process.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

COLLABORATIONS

Collaborative efforts are the hallmark of this literacy/work services plan. It provides wrap-around services with the assistance of partner providers. Nine Star is not an intermediary agency just for the sake of providing Members to the community, but this proposal has an intentional, intermediary design to enhance human service programs statewide and provide value added services to the under- and unemployed throughout Alaska. This intermediary design stretches resources, incorporates integrated services, diversifies service locations, and provides a platform for community wide service. Community organizations, faith based entities, private business, government agencies, and individuals all play a role in this collaborative effort.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Community organizations, faith based entities, private business, government agencies, and individuals all contribute office space where Members serve, cash and/or services to support the Members' living expenses, supervision of project work, emotional support, reduced cost housing, etc. Entities who value AmeriCorps Member service have built into their budgets to include non-federal match for AmeriCorps Member service. Among many other things, free gas cards have been donated for Members who drive their personal cars while serving; the city of Anchorage has provided bus passes at a reduced cost; Members are invited to take free computer classes and test for Microsoft Office certification at no cost to them; and partnerships have been forged to provide opportunities for service to the under- and unemployed population of Alaska. In addition, volunteers contribute their expertise and time to increase the success of the Learn & Earn Alaska project.

WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

The community stakeholders that collaborate with Nine Star's AmeriCorps project include the Anchorage School District, the Alaska Department of Labor, the Alaska Department of Corrections, the Division of Public Assistance, the Alaska Department of Education, the Anchorage Regional Adult Education Consortium, the Alaska Coalition for Prisoner Re-entry, Anchorage Youth Development Coalition, the Anti-Drug Task Force, the Division of Vocational Resources, business owners, faith organizations, tribal entities, the United Way of Anchorage, the Red Ribbon Coalition, women's shelters, literacy organizations, food pantries, and many more. This project provides a wide range of education and employment services through the arms of many entities and volunteers. Stakeholders invest themselves and their agencies in the work of preparing Alaskans for the world of work. They provide a means for spreading the word about AmeriCorps service as they garnish support from their own agencies or through their connections in the community. This Lean and Earn Project is widely known and well-respected among community-minded and statewide leaders.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: GROWTH & TARGETED SERVICE

NINE STAR'S GROWTH

When Nine Star was established, there were four part-time employees and a first year budget of \$36,000. Thirty-three years later, Nine Star's budget is 6.5 million dollars and houses 136 employees and AmeriCorps Members. This is a stable organization whose founding president continues to serve it well even after 33 years. Three of the current eight board members have also served since its birth.

SERVICE TO LOW INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS

Not only does Nine Star target the under- and unemployed to receive the services of Learn & Earn Alaska AmeriCorps Members, but it provides service in nine locations throughout Anchorage--all easily accessible to at-risk youth, unemployed seniors, those with needs for improved literacy, ex-offenders, and public assistance clients. The three neighborhoods in Anchorage named for re-development--Mt. View, Fairview, and Northeast Muldoon are part of the service delivery area. Additionally, there are seventeen partners who host Members that serve in under-employed neighborhoods and communities.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

E. COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY

1. COST EFFECTIVENESS

a) CORPORATION COST PER MEMBER SERVICE YEAR (MSY); b) DIVERSE NON-FEDERAL SUPPORT; c) DECREASED RELIANCE ON FEDERAL SUPPORT

In line with CNCS guidelines, the FTE Member for the Learn & Earn Alaska project cost is \$13,000, with match at 26% in section 1, 39% in section 2 & 37% overall. The practices set in place with past

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AmeriCorps grants ensure diverse non-federal funds are effective. Match funds do NOT come from federal resources. This practice is thoroughly discussed with any host agency prior to Members being assigned to them. State program funds from the Departments of Education, Labor, & Corrections bring some of the match because:

1. The State of Alaska strongly supports AmeriCorps service within the state.
2. Integrated programs allow for "value added" assistance to strengthen existing services through the activities of AmeriCorps Members assigned to programs serving at risk youth, dropouts, those needing English instruction, low income Alaskans, ex-offenders, and public assistance recipients.

Members strengthen their host sites and make community services more sustainable. The practices set in place to decrease reliance on federal funds are still in place. Each year as the required match goes up, support in the community increases. The increased match is being met effectively. The number of clients served in Alaskan communities who host AmeriCorps Members, increases. The dollars from CNCS proportionately decrease as match and in-kind donations increase. The budget clearly provides adequate support of the program design.

It is important to note that as Nine Star creates its AmeriCorps budget, it takes into consideration the overarching needs of the State commission. Nine Star recognizes the high costs associated with some of the more rural AmeriCorps projects and works to keep its cost per member as low as possible to accommodate for the higher Member costs of other grantees.

2. BUDGET ADEQUACY

A study of the budget and a reading of the budget narrative will affirm that there is no "fat" in the Learn & Earn Alaska's project budget, but there is a carefully designed plan to meet the needs of Members who serve in this project. Partners must, and will, support the needs of those served in this project as well as

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the Members who serve in their agencies. As in years past, this project remains cost effective because it integrates program services internally (at Nine Star sites) and externally (at partner sites). Its design counts on the support of partner agencies and community contributions in volunteerism, cash, in-kind donations, and resource sharing in the realm of shared program services. The outcomes and outputs expected would be far less bold if the activities were led only by a small band of Members in a stand-alone project. This project budget recognizes the contributions of partner agency staff, community volunteers, and the integration of multiple funding sources and thus bring value added services to not only Nine Star, but Alaska as a community. What partners bring to the table makes the stated outputs and outcomes doable.

In addition to the named outputs and outcomes in the Learn & Earn Alaska project, this budget design will produce other community outcomes. Agencies will find a better way to work as a cohesive unit and develop a system of referrals from one entity to another that will mean seamless services for job seekers and students. It is expected that public policy will be influenced so as to bring a clearer understanding of the needs of under- and unemployed residents and a community design to better support the educational and career paths of at-risk Alaskan individuals and families--the ultimate outcome being financial self-sufficiency. And the hope of hopes, is that Alaskan young people will grow up in a community where they reach education benchmarks, find meaningful employment, and become engaged in community action and volunteerism.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

F. EVALUATION SUMMARY OR PLAN

Data on program activities and community impact are entered into a database. Continuous improvement in the Project is achieved through a system of on-going self-assessment/evaluation, data collection, client feedback, and quarterly reports. Project improvement is attained through the combined efforts of Nine Star's education and employment staff members, project staff, site supervisors,

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managers from Nine Star's many granting agencies, and the Members themselves. This process takes place as program staff:

- * Review monthly reports from Members and site supervisors,
- * Instigate contact with Members monthly,
- * Meet monthly with Nine Star leaders,
- * Visit and/or contact site supervisors at least bi-monthly,
- * Listen to leaders from education and employment partner entities as they discuss AmeriCorps service needs,
- * Examine data from Member service, and
- * Evaluate monitoring reports from granting agencies.

In addition, the Project has an annual formal, financial program audit by the CPA firm of Mikunda, Cottrell & Co. where grant fiscal and programmatic items are reviewed. Because there is such a strong system of program integration, the service provided by members is also examined during grant audits by the Division of Public Assistance, Department of Labor, etc., and the reflections by program staff are strong statements of praise regarding the positive impact Member service has on clients. ALL Nine Star's programs and community partner programs need their Members to provide the enhanced services needed by our at risk populations.

In addition to on-going project evaluation/assessment, an experienced, external evaluator will design a survey to collect data on the success of this proposed Learn and Earn Project. The evaluator's process includes talking to participants, supervisors, Members, and project staff to provide feedback on best practices and strategies for areas that can strengthen the project. There will be an evaluation of Nine Star's current AmeriCorps Learn and Earn Project during 2010. These findings will be incorporated into

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Year 1 of this currently proposed project. To evaluate the success of the new Learn and Earn Alaska grant, there will be an evaluation completed during Year 2 (2012) of the Project.

We "listened" to the community, the Alaska State Community Service Commission, those in business, professionals from the faith and social service communities, Nine Star staff, former and current Members, and from clients themselves. We "paid attention" to the Requests for Proposal introduced by state and federal entities, the data we gathered, and the success stories submitted by Members and agency staff as well as their tales of frustration. We "watched" to see what worked and what was yet needed. We "examined" our pocketbooks to see how we could best access and share community resources. We "gazed" into the lives of Alaskans to see how Members could best provide service. And out of this assessment and evaluation process was born a refined design for AmeriCorps service. There are community-wide, integrated services in literacy, digital divide (computer literacy), prisoner re-entry, and work readiness for at-risk youth, low income and unemployed seniors, families on public assistance, ex-offenders, literacy deficient students, and under- and unemployed Alaskans that come together in this intermediary system of service. Members who serve in the proposed Learn & Earn Alaska AmeriCorps Project will be able to GET THINGS DONE.

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

2. Program Clarification Items:

a. DO MEMBERS SERVE WITH OR AT COMMUNITY COUNCILS?

From egrants Rational & Approach:

"The need for Member service in the world of literacy and work has also been ratified by the Alaska State

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Departments of Education, Corrections, Labor, and Health and Social Services in their reports on service to undereducated, underemployed Alaskans. Along with the Anchorage School District, the University of Alaska, and community councils where AmeriCorps members serve, the community support for Member service is at an all time high. The high performance, "go-to-work" demands in welfare to work and the state's Workforce Investment Act programs have been met due to Member service in recent years."

a. RESPONSE:

Members do NOT serve in or with the community councils. They serve in neighborhoods that are overseen by local community councils such as the Fairview Community Council, Mt. View Community Council, etc. The sentence might have more clearly read, "The community's desire for AmeriCorps Member service is at an all time high as shown by the support for AmeriCorps service from the Anchorage School District, the University of Alaska, and neighborhood Community Councils seek out Member service."

b. DO MEMBERS SERVE AS TUTORS?

b. RESPONSE:

Members do not serve as tutors. The literacy/education activities in which they are involved consist of:

* Assessment (Testing for Basic Skills--TABE; pre-GED tests; Basic English Skills Test--BEST; etc. They receive instruction to be able to appropriately administer the assessments.)

* Adult Basic Skills/ESL Classroom Instruction (If Members serve in this capacity, they are experienced classroom instructors--not tutors.)

* High School/GED Completion Coaching (Members who serve in this area provide technical support for on-line instruction--both distant delivery and in-house labs. They help students decide which on-line

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classes or classroom instruction is appropriate for them so they can complete their HS diploma or GED most expeditiously. Finally, they track student progress to help them focus and complete their goals.)

- * Even Start & Family Literacy Community Events

- * Computer Instruction

- * After-School Clubs (Students in these activities participate in learning games, quiet homework study time, community employment exploration, computer instruction, etc.)

- * Literacy Promotion (reading fairs, book recycling, etc.)

c. WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR MEMBER SUPERVISION?

From egrants Member Outputs and Outcomes:

"When Members receive their site assignments, they also are assigned to a specific supervisor who is charged with guiding their daily programmatic education or employment activities. These "program guides" are responsible to provide program expertise along with policies and procedures specific to their team and their agency. The Project Coordinator explains the heart and regulations of AmeriCorps service to supervisors to ensure that daily activities are in line with CNCS Provisions. Every effort is made to match a Member with a supervisor whose leadership style supports that Member's ability to serve Alaska's at-risk population while ensuring their development as Member. Occasionally, when a Member is "mismatched", an organizational or programmatic transfer occurs. Past experience tells us that "mismatched" does not necessarily mean "incapable." Service is a journey where there are many different paths to success.

Two performance appraisals are conducted during a Member's term. The appraisal form used is the same one used by all site supervisors and not agency specific. Supervisors understand that employee outcomes are not the same as those for Members. The goal is to use the appraisals as tools to increase

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the Members' awareness of the skills they bring to a project and the skills they need to develop.

Appraisals are not meant to be punitive, but rather supportive in nature, and essential to the evaluation of the Member and the project. Members complete the same appraisal form as their supervisors prior to the appraisal "meeting" as a self-assessment instrument and strengthens the entire process.

The Learn & Earn coordinator is a supervisor of sorts for all the AmeriCorps Members. It is the responsibility of the coordinator to talk to supervisors and Members even when all seems fine on the service. Listening and watching are important skills attached to the supervision and success of all Members. The supervisors and the project staff are trained to understand that supervision is for the purpose of programmatic and grant compliance, but also for positive Member development."

c. RESPONSE

Each Member is assigned a specific supervisor to oversee their service assignments, specific Member training, daily activities, administer Member performance appraisals, look over monthly Member service reports, and sign time sheets. Interaction between supervisors and Members is the norm. Nine Star's culture and philosophy mandates that:

"It is a supervisor's responsibility to see that the individuals they supervise are successful in carrying out their service assignments."

On a practical level, that means training support, clear communication, resolution of difficult relationships, ensuring appropriate client interaction, etc. The supervisor often shares Member support/training with other staff members who can provide peer mentoring and/or "expert" on-the-job training opportunities.

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The "supervisor of sorts" that is talked about in the section above is merely referring to the fact that the Learn & Earn Coordinator is an additional support to the Members as well as a programmatic overseer. The Coordinator is an extra resource for strategizing difficult issues with the Member, being a go-between with supervisors, helping with placement concerns, etc. Just as a supervisor must oversee Member activities on a daily basis, the Coordinator must "supervise" and ensure that the Member's activities are appropriate and match the grant and its performance measures. The coordinator must always be concerned that a Member has every opportunity to be successful during their year of service.

d. COST PER MEMBER

d. RESPONSE

Nine Star has always done its best to make its AmeriCorps program a cost effective project with lots of partner and community support. The increase in the MSY cost will make us a more viable program in our current economy; i.e.--travel, rent, supplies, copier costs, phone charges, recruitment costs, etc.

In addition to the increase in every day expenses, we have added a part-time program assistant to the project to ensure more support to Members and accuracy in programmatic data collection and aggregation. She works with Member enrollment, timesheets, Member insurance, data entry, meeting assistance, partner coordination, etc. The cost of this person is approximately \$20,000. Staff insurance--which affects all three of the staff members paid in this project--was quoted at a 19% increase this past year and is expected to rise even more next January when this project begins.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS regarding Compliance with required Criminal History Checking Regulations:

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The Learn and Earn Alaska AmeriCorps Project will continue to comply with CNCS's Criminal History check regulations by having all staff and Members associated with the grant complete a successful background check.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS regarding Performance Measures:

The Performance Measures in the areas of Opportunity and Education were altered to align with the national performance measures. The other two performance measures are part of the requirement and/or the State Plan goals as outlined by the Serve Alaska Commission who oversees Alaska's AmeriCorps projects.

Continuation Changes

1. Performance measures were altered to follow CNCS guidelines.
2. Miscellaneous budget items were changed as instructed by CNCS guidelines.

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We are grateful to have been selected for funding for year 2 of this grant. We have however, decided that it would be best for us to "right-size". Therefore, we are requesting 37 MSYs instead of 55 MSYs. performance measures reflect a portion of the service that our Members provide

It is clear that the performance measures outlined in the proposal are not the only services and outcomes of each AmeriCorps project. We will focus on our approved performance measures and we will not change our focus on the performance measures even with the reduction of Members. We expect to meet these performance measures. There will be aspects of the project that are being re-designed. Some of the "value added services" that help our clients in multiple aspects of their lives will be reduced to accomodate the reduction of Members. We KNOW what support our Members bring to the services we provide. We believe however, that a reduction in Members will not change our performance measure

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outputs and outcome.

We had expected to place more Members at the Department of Corrections. They are not able to support as many Members as they had planned. The project's education & job placement performance measures emphasis will be moved to Nine Star's programs and those of other partners such as Fairbanks Literacy Program, Sitka University, etc. We will meet the performance measures, but with a little different design.

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - None
 Geographic Focus - Urban
 Geographic Focus - Rural
 Encore Program

Priority Areas

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Services
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 45

Service Categories

Job Development/Placement

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Economic Opportunity

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Over 2000 disadvantaged youth and adults will receive job placement, work training, and literacy training to prepare them for the world of work and increase their quality of life through financial self-sufficiency. The following services are included in the scope of services--clients may avail themselves to one or more of these services:

- * Work Readiness Instruction
- * Computer Instruction
- * Education (Literacy assessments & testing, High School/GED instruction, & English as a Second Language classes)
- * Job development
- * Post-Employment Coaching

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

600 of the 2000 Alaskans served in this AmeriCorps project will obtain unsubsidized employment.

Indicator: O10: Individuals placed in jobs.

Target : Employment will be obtained by individuals on public assistance, ex-offenders, HS/GED recipients, & at-risk youth.

Target Value: 600

Instruments: Enrollment data will be collected by Members who serve the disadvantaged population and then entered into Nine Star's sophisticated data base by AmeriCorps staff for aggregation and reporting purposes.

PM Statement: 600 of the 2000 Alaskans served in this AmeriCorps project will obtain unsubsidized employment through direct job readiness coaching and job development assistance.

Result: Output

Result.

800 individuals will receive job readiness skills training.

Indicator: O2: Individuals receiving job training services.

Target : Job readiness training will be provided to individuals/families on public assistance, ex-offenders, & at-risk youth.

Target Value: 800

Instruments: Enrollment data will be collected by Members who serve the disadvantaged population and then entered into Nine Star's sophisticated data base by AmeriCorps staff for aggregation and reporting purposes.

PM Statement: 800 of the 2000 Alaskans served in this AmeriCorps project will receive direct services that will improve their ability to "get a job, keep a job, and advance on the job."

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable